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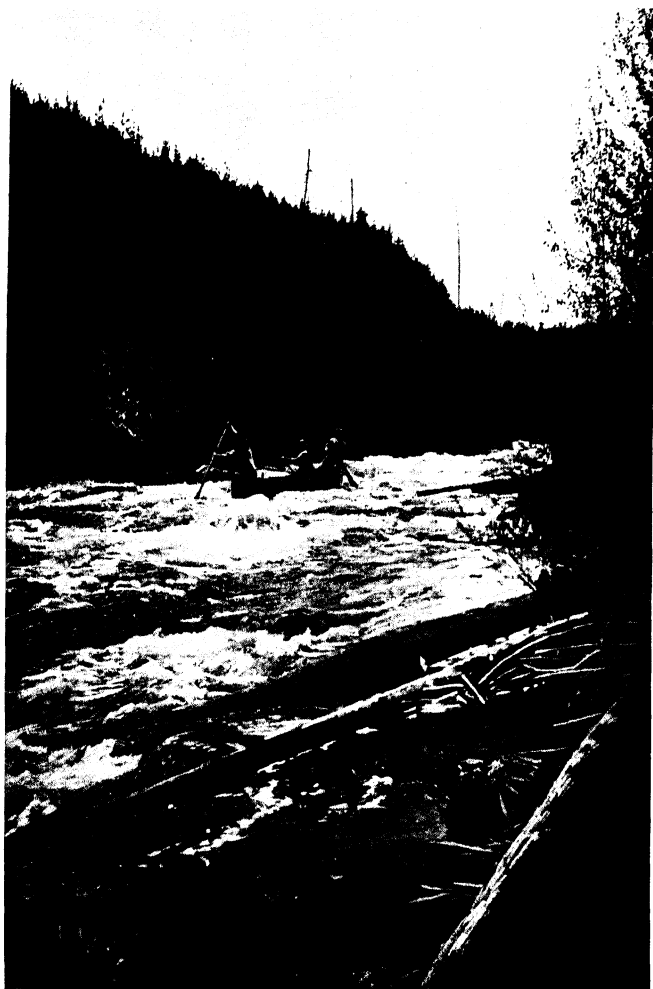
**FURS AND THE FUR
TRADE**

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THE PERILS OF TRANSPORT IN THE FUR COUNTRY

(1458J)

Frontispiece

PITMAN'S COMMON COMMODITIES
AND INDUSTRIES

FURS

AND THE FUR TRADE

CAPTAIN JOHN C. SACHS

(LATE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE REGIMENT)

LECTURER AT DRAPERS' SUMMER SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE



THIRD EDITION

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PREFACE

TO THIRD EDITION

THERE are many people who sell furs—and a great many more who wear them. To all of these—to such furriers as are not too old or too busy to learn ; to those fur salespeople who would like to know something more about the highly attractive goods they sell, and to those women who look better in furs (i.e. the majority of them)—to these, then, this book makes its appeal.

Woman's glory *was* her hair, now it is her furs. Furs make the plain woman attractive, the attractive woman beautiful, and the beautiful woman superb, and if this work only awakens in its readers a tithe of the interest in furs that their beauty, and the romantic circumstances attendant on their marketing, warrant—the author will be amply rewarded.

The book is severely non-technical, and aims at giving to the world and his wife, especially the latter, facts that are not generally known about a most fascinating subject.

The fact that a third edition is now called for argues that the others were not published in vain.

JOHN C. SACHS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MANY authorities must be consulted in the compilation of a work of this nature, and the author wishes to express his thanks to Mr. N. H. Bacon (late Administrator to the Hudson's Bay Co.), Messrs. Cross, Johns, and Peacock, of Revillon Frères, Messrs. P. & R. Poland, G. Rice, and Mariovitch, whose generous assistance has greatly lightened his labours.

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FURS AND THE FUR TRADE

CHAPTER I

FURS THROUGHOUT THE AGES

THE practice of wearing furs is as old as humanity, and the modern woman who snugly nestles in her fur coat—be it of priceless sable or the more homely rabbit—cannot reproach herself, even did she wish to, with being other than a true daughter of Eve. Our earliest recorded ancestors, Adam and Eve, wore furs (Gen. iii, 21), and although the mere male does not, even in these post-profiteering days, affect them to any extent, at least in temperate climes, no modern woman, on the other hand, considers herself “dressed” until upon the finished products of the dressmaker’s art she has superimposed her “furs.”

Furs have a tremendous fascination for womankind : ‘Arriet of Mile End and Hildegarde of Park Lane each assumes her “furs” when she wishes to impress, not merely when she is desirous of keeping warm ; and Kipling never wrote a truer couplet than when he said—

The colonel’s lady
And Judy O’Grady
Are sisters under the *skin*.

In the very early stages of humanity, skins were utilized by both sexes for warmth, and it is this fact which enables the furrier to state that his trade is the

oldest in the world, as the habit of wearing skins obviously outdates the arts of spinning and weaving.

Necessity came first, but luxury soon followed, and the utilitarian and the beautiful have marched side by side from remote antiquity unto the present day. We continually read of skins and furs in the Classics ; but, although they are frequently mentioned as articles of clothing, there are abundant instances when luxury and decoration are the uses to which they are put.

In reference to the latter, one may read in Exodus xxvi, 7 and 14, and xxxv, 7, and xxxvi, 14, that, whilst the outer curtains of the tabernacle were made of goats' hair, the covering was of rams' skins dyed red, and the outer covering of badgers' skins.

Here is a concrete instance of furs being used both for utility and ornament, the badgers' skins (some authorities translate " otters " for " badgers ") being a protective cover, whilst the red-dyed rams' skins were obviously used from a decorative point of view.

(Whether the red marks that our farmers place on sheep to this day are the identical colour, it is impossible to say with certainty ; but it is a peculiar fact that in regions to which the lost tribes may have migrated—Asia Minor and Armenia, to wit—this brick-red colour is used very freely in ornamenting (?) horses and cattle.)

It is, of course, obvious that some method of " dressing " skins was discovered very early in history. A skin flayed from an animal and used in its rough state as a garment would speedily become, or rather remain, exceedingly uncomfortable ; and one may assume that when the skin got hard, the lumps would be pounded with a rock. Skins are still pounded, but hardly in such a crude manner. Then it would occur to some savage or other that it might be as well to get the skin

softer and supple before wearing, so the blood and fat would be scraped off, and the skin dried and pounded before its owner used it as a garment. The discovery that alum was a preservative was probably made by the Chinese, who claim to have made use of furs for 3,000 years. Their methods of dressing skins, however, have stood still for centuries, and the same remark applies to other Asiatic races, e.g. Persians, Bokharans, and Tartars.

The Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans all made lavish use of furs. The practice is mentioned by Herodotus, and Queen Semiramis (2182 B.C.) brought back as loot from an Indian campaign 8,000 tiger skins. We wonder what she did with them ! Possibly she added them to the uniforms of the royal household troops. Anyhow, we may be sure that they were displayed at either Babylon or Nineveh in due course. Assur-bani-pal doubtless put to good use the skins of the lions he is depicted slaying, in the bas-reliefs in the British Museum.

There is every reason to conjecture that, even in the time of Homer (*circa* 850 B.C.), Armenia (which, by the way, gives the name to ermine) was the centre of a large fur trade, skins coming thither from (to give their modern names) Siberia, Russia, Persia, and Bokhara, and even farther afield, and thence being distributed into Europe and elsewhere.

It seems unkind to destroy an old legend, but there are not wanting hard-headed people who state that the celebrated adventure of Jason, in his ship *Argo*, on his search for the Golden Fleece, is merely a pretty allegory enshrining the much more mundane adventures of Jason the fur trader.

They allege that Jason, whose methods of business were strongly akin to those of certain merchants of the present day, embarked on a fur-trading expedition (the

Golden Fleece being symbolical of the wealth he obtained by disposing of the furs), passed through the Dardanelles into the Black Sea, and made a highly successful voyage to what are now Southern Russia and Armenia. He returned thence with a valuable cargo, which he sold at a large profit, and lived more or less happily ever afterwards. This rather destroys the romance.

Hercules, we are told, after slaying the Nemean lion, used its skin as his only garment, at which Omphale, judging from her character as handed down to posterity, probably scoffed with considerable effect.

The Romans learnt their ornamental use of furs from the Greeks and the numerous wild tribes whom they at various times engaged in battle. Both Greeks and Romans used fur in their military uniforms; but, normally, owing to the warmth of the climate, furs were mostly used as rugs or covers for benches and couches. The Greeks obtained their knowledge of furs from the frequent campaigns waged by Alexander and others in Asia Minor and Asia proper, where furs were in general use about this time (444-323 B.C.).

The wild tribes in the North of Europe, who subsequently overcame the Romans, were usually clothed in skins, and such wealth as they possessed was mainly composed of furs which they used largely for bartering. Their trading in this commodity, which introduced them to the luxuries of their civilized Southern neighbours, was eventually a determining factor in their decision to make raids on the Roman Empire, which eventually crumbled and broke under their reiterated attacks.

When the seat of government was transferred from Rome to Constantinople or Byzantium, furs were very freely worn indeed, and for various reasons. The big city on the Golden Horn, being fairly easily accessible

from the fur-producing countries, e.g. Asia Minor or the Caucasus, provided a highly convenient outlet for the fur trade, and consequently became the great fur mart of the world. This position it maintained for some 1,400 years, and as Byzantium—in addition to being the capital of the Eastern Empire, an empire which for sheer luxury has never been surpassed—held the same place with regard to fashion that Paris holds to-day, it is easy to realize what an impetus the fur trade received during that city's ascendancy in Europe.

The climate, bitterly cold in winter, also lent, and still lends, itself to the exploitation of furs, which, a luxury in summer—although still freely worn in Constantinople in warm weather—become an absolute necessity in winter. The reader of *Trilby* might deduce that Svengali was a Byzantine, although du Maurier makes him of Central European extraction, for was not his ambition to wear his fur coat "all ze winter, and all ze summaire, too"?

The influence of Byzantium spread throughout those long centuries steadily westward. The Genoese and Venetians, whose galleys sailed every known sea, brought the Eastern civilization, with its love of display, to the countries of Europe. It became the fashion to wear furs, and it is interesting to trace the essentially Eastern character of the Italian costumes from the fifth to the eleventh centuries. Fur markets were early established in Venice and Genoa, to which came merchants from Germany, France, and (a little later) England.

Britain, owing to its distance and insularity, did not come under this Eastern influence. The Britons, when first encountered by Julius Caesar, wore skins roughly fashioned, in which habit they resembled the Gauls and Germans on the Continent. An interesting fresco may be seen on the walls of the Royal Exchange, London,

depicting ancient Britons trading furs with Phoenician merchants ; the latter would dispose of their cargoes in the Mediterranean.

During the 400-year domination of the Romans, civilized clothing of linen and wool came into use amongst the Britons, the wearing of skins becoming more and more the attributes of the tribes in the North and West of the island, who were never entirely subdued.

With the departure of the Romans, however (A.D. 410), Britain relapsed steadily into something akin to barbarism. Successive waves of savage foemen—Picts, Angles, Jutes, Saxons, and Danes—rolled on the enfeebled country. Manufactures ceased, and men and women perforce wore furs—nothing else being available.

The invaders used furs as an adjunct to their other clothing : a favourite practice on the part of a man who had slain a wolf or bear was to wear the whole skin and utilize the head as a kind of helmet. Sir Rider Haggard attributes the same idea to the Zulus in the nineteenth century.

The incessant fighting and consequent killing off of the British population enabled wolves to increase to an enormous extent, and many were the efforts made to keep them under.

A payment was made for each wolf slain (Hereward described himself as Wolf's Head), and King Edgar had the brilliant idea of substituting 300 wolves' heads per annum for the usual tribute in North Wales. This proved most efficacious, and by the fourth year the number could not be made up (*circa* A.D. 973).

The civilization of the Normans, the descendants of Rolf the Ganger and his yarls, was much in advance of that of the Saxons, and would not permit them to use rough skins other than as rugs ; and it is a curious fact that fur was used as an appurtenance to the apparel

of the male far more than to that of the female, throughout antiquity and the early Middle Ages, at least in European countries.

The Lady Rowena wears a kirtle of pale green silk and a crimson robe of finest wool; the unhappy Rebecca is attired in a simarre and head-dress of silk, but the men wear furs in profusion.

Prince John wears a fur tippet, and his cloak is lined with sables. Prior Aymer, setting the edicts of Popes and conventual rules at defiance, has his sleeves lined and turned up with rich furs; Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert assumes at the feast a tunic of silk trimmed with fur; and Cedric the Saxon wears a green tunic, furred at throat and cuffs with miniver.

The man, in fact, did the hunting and fighting, and wore the spoil, a useful and ornamental trophy of his success; but when woman has set her heart on a thing, who shall say her nay? And the ladies, from Norman times onward, made steady and successful inroads on this manly prerogative—not their first nor their last attacks on the costumes of their men-folk.

Man must ever slave and toil
That vanity may wear the spoil,

says Professor Black; and the worst aspect of the couplet is its hopeless veracity. We find King John, in 1211, ordering for his wife Isabella "a robe of crimson cloth barred with nine bars of grey fur." One may deduce from this fact that female fashions were designed by men then as now.

John himself was no ordinary dandy. In addition to the furs already mentioned in *Ivanhoe*, he wore magnificent crimson satin robes lined and edged with black fur; his gloves and his crown were both edged with fur.

His brother Richard I, however, and his ally Philip II of France, both announced to their nobles, when setting out on the third crusade, their resolution not to wear ermine, sable, or other costly furs.

By this time, advancing civilization had so increased the number and variety of fur-bearing animals laid under contribution for their skins, that the aristocracy began to get jealous of the use made of furs by the commoners. We have already mentioned the edicts directed against the wearing of furs by the clergy, and may note, *en passant*, that in 1127 the Council of London allowed abbesses and nuns to wear the furs of lambs and cats only; furs were then entirely forbidden to the Church.

Edward III, whose popular wife Philippa had enough sables in her wardrobe to make a modern woman feel green with envy, ordered that ermine was to be worn by Royalty only; and this fur, powdered with black spots and termed miniver, to this day figures in the Coronation robes of our kings and queens.

He also ordered that no person with an income of less than £100 a year should wear furs at all, under penalty of forfeiture.

It was at this period that women had achieved equality, or rather superiority, with regard to the wearing of fur. Sleeveless bodices of ermine, robes of sable or fox—all were displayed in their turn; and we learn from records that queen after queen was arrayed in a manner that causes the modern individual to wonder how she could sustain the weight. For instance, Isabella de Valois, wife of Richard II, had an ermine cloak *eight yards* long; the queen of Henry V wore a skirt of ermine; whilst Anne Boleyn had a furred nightgown, and those of Elizabeth were fur-lined. Whilst on the subject of night attire, it is of interest to note that

prior to the Great War the wealthier Turks used fur-lined sheets in winter.

The high-born ladies in Tudor times wore furs in profusion. The various wives of Henry VIII—Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr—had wardrobes of furs to an extent unequalled in the present times. Henry himself is portrayed swathed in furs, but the decline and fall of man as a fur-wearing animal was well advanced by the end of the Tudor period in English history.

Not quite the same story can be written of the Continent, as during the Renaissance furs were, to a large extent, abandoned by women and relegated to those "potent, grave, and reverend signors," the doctors and lawyers. Catherine de Medici, whose opinion of the other sex is historic, was quite emphatic on the subject. "Leave furs," said she, "to those old foxes, the men."

The influence of the Renaissance on England was mainly literary, and to it can be traced some of our favourite fairy tales.

It seems sad, but the fur trade appears to have no consideration whatever for the old tales and legends. For instance, Cinderella. How many people realize that Cinderella's slippers were made, not of glass, but of fur? Every child who knows the story—and who does not?—wonders at the fairy's selecting such an uncomfortable material as glass for Cinderella's footwear; but the story is a literary curiosity. It is believed to have originated in Egypt long before our era, and was re-written by that French prince of storytellers, Perrault. He wrote that Cinderella's slippers were made of "vaire," but his printer, in an age when even less importance was attached to correct spelling than to-day, made "vaire" (a fur) into "verre"

(glass), and the error was perpetuated in the English translation.

“Vaire” is really a heraldic fur composed of silver and azure, and is conjectured to have been ermine, miniver, or the underpart of the grey squirrel; in any case, to wear it was a privilege of nobility, so that Cinderella’s fairy-bestowed fur slippers denoted that the wearer was of the highest rank.

Another Renaissance fairy tale, *Puss in Boots*, also from the French, is considered by some to be merely the fanciful enshrining of a furrier or skin merchant who amassed much wealth by trading in cats’ skins!

Our own Dick Whittington and his cat—let us not pursue this destructive criticism farther than to remark that Sir Richard, thrice Lord Mayor of London, certainly traded in skins. He is buried in the Church of St. Michael, Paternoster Royal, in College Hill, the heart of the London raw fur trade to this day.

To return to the Continent, Louis XI (1423–1483), that strangely complex character, wore habitually an old fox skin cap, ornamented with small metal figures of the saints.

Whether he selected this fur as a hint to all and sundry that his character was vulpine, or whether, as is more probable, he wore it from motives of economy, we know not. History is silent on the point. His nobles, however, and in fact every male citizen who could afford it, had an edging of fur on their sleeves—those peculiar double sleeves of the period—hat, or cloak; but women, to all intents and purposes, abandoned furs, except as rugs and wall hangings, for over a century.

The Stuart period in Britain was the exact antithesis of the Tudor. Whether it was due, in the first instance, to the well-known parsimony of James I or not cannot be stated with accuracy; but it is an undoubted fact

that the fur trade happened on troublous times with his advent.

With Charles I the new costumes, although extremely picturesque, did not lend themselves to the display of fur ; whilst the Puritans eschewed it as strongly savouring of vanity. The trade, therefore, languished until after the Restoration, when a most important event took place.

Prince Rupert, as a change from his exploits as a cavalry leader and a buccaneer, founded a company in 1670, which obtained a Royal Charter granting it the sole trade and commerce to be obtained in Hudson Bay and adjacent territories ; and from this may be dated the real commencement of the British fur trade.

This company was and is still known as the Hudson's Bay Company, and some account of its activities will be given later on in the course of this work.

The Restoration, with its attendant sweeping away of sad-coloured garments, lank hair, and steeple-crowned hats, went, as is usual in such cases, to the extreme of luxury ; and the fur trade, to a certain extent, shared in the resultant wave of prosperity.

In spite of this, furs were not generally worn in either England or France for a considerable period after the Restoration. John Ridd (in *Lorna Doone*) did not know a seal cloak when he saw it, in which he resembles ninety-nine persons out of every hundred at the present day. The same hero, when in London, puts up at a " fellmonger's " or furrier's at the sign of the " Seal and Squirrel," and sleeps on a mattress of " good skin dressings " ; whilst the argument he has with the worthy Master Ramsack, the furrier, on the subject of " moths " is delightful.

In France the fashion of wearing furs was reintroduced by Marie Leczinska. Madame de Maintenon's

effort to do so was a failure, but she was a morganatic wife only : had she been Louis XIV's queen, a different tale might have been told—to the great advantage of the fur industry. Still, furs, with the exception of scarves, were but little worn during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Whether from motives of economy or otherwise, the only persons who are pictured as wearing furs are royal or semi-royal. Queens Mary II, Anne, and Charlotte in England, and Marie de Medici, Madame de Maintenon, and Marie Antoinette across the Channel, have all permitted painters to portray them in furs ; but we seek for them vainly elsewhere.

There is, however, a different story to relate with regard to Holland. The Dutch painters found furs in everyday use in the costume of their country, but in Holland (as in Germany, Russia, and Poland) they were worn for utility ; and the fur garments depicted by Rubens and other Dutch artists are more remarkable for their comfort than their charm. In those days, a fur merchant was a tradesman only ; to-day, in addition, he must be an artist.

Napoleon's campaigns brought furs into France with a vengeance. The loot of Europe was carried back behind his eagles, and the resultant effect was marked. The Empire indoor dress, with its classic lines, was covered by furs in profusion when the fair wearer went out of doors.

At the Emperor's coronation, he appears, in David's celebrated picture, as clad in royal ermine ; whilst Josephine's train falls in fold on fold of the same snowy fur on the arm of her attendant.

The French light cavalry, the hussars particularly, wore heavily-furred dolmans, and their caps and saddle housings were also of the same material. The caps of

the Old Guard were of bearskin, and the numerous ways in which fur was made use of among Napoleon's troops may be studied with much interest in Meissonier's pictures of the period.

Fur has apparently, from the remotest times, been considered an appanage of the military costume ; notice has already been taken of the Greek and Roman warriors, amongst civilized races, and during the Napoleonic *régime*, besides the French—Prussians, Russians, Austrians, and British made use of this material in their military uniforms. Even at the present day in the British Army, the Horse Artillery, Foot Guards, Scots Greys, Hussars, Fusiliers, King's Royal Rifles, and Rifle Brigade wear fur head-dresses when on ceremonial parades. During the long struggle with Napoleon, however, when the troops both fought and paraded in what we should now call full dress, fur was by no means so lavishly employed. In many instances, when used at all, it took the shape of a trimming rather than constituting the entire head-dress ; as an example, the Rifle Brigade, whose head-dress to-day is an astrakhan busby, wore but little fur at Corunna ; whilst the Brigade of Guards at Waterloo wore shakos and not the present-day picturesque bearskins.

The introduction of extravagant head-dresses in the British Army originated during the long peace that ensued on the fall of Napoleon, and they apparently still persist.

Parade uniforms were left at home during the Great War (1914–1918) ; but, in order to combat the bitter cold of the trenches in Flanders, our troops were clothed, in addition to their khaki, in a garment termed a "jerkin," which was made of either dressed leather or goat skin, and the sight of a battalion on the march, arrayed like so many Robinson Crusoes, rather discounted one's

ideas of the pomp of war. There was no question, however, as to the utility of these garments. Many of the German regiments carried knapsacks made of hide, but dressed with the hair on.

To revert to the ladies, however, the caricatures of Rowlandson and Gillray show the fair sex fearfully and wonderfully arrayed as to furs. In many pictures may be seen those enormous muffs, which, with but slight adaptation (such is the ever-revolving wheel of fashion), were again popular in the twentieth century. Immense "boas" are also to be seen, though these—thank heaven!—have not been resuscitated since Victorian days.

There was a gorgeous display of furs at the Coronation of Queen Victoria. In fact, at any British Coronation the display of ermine—which, with various "spottings" denoting the rank of the wearer, is worn by the sovereign and the peers—adds greatly to the charm of the whole magnificent picture.

The wearing of furs to-day is practically universal among the fair sex in all civilized countries, when the temperature warrants it—frequently when it does not.

They are worn by every one from the highest to the lowest; and though the majority of the old British aristocracy can no longer afford to assume the more expensive furs in which they once delighted—the *nouveaux riches* of Great Britain, America, and Germany can and do. Most magnificent furs are worn by the wives of South American magnates; but the Russian aristocracy, whose furs were the finest in the world, no longer exists. Many of their superb coats, stoles, and muffs have been sold in Europe during the last decade.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMANCE OF THE FUR TRADE

To state that the average man or woman has any but the haziest notion of the extent, ramifications, and romance of the fur trade, is to utter the veriest platitude.

The above somewhat sweeping assertion needs but little elaboration, as the following proof, open to anyone to test for him or herself on any winter's day, is sufficiently obvious.

Let the doubter take his stand in any busy shopping thoroughfare in London, Paris, or New York—Oxford Street, London, for example. Let him count the women who pass by in a period of five minutes, noting at the same time those wearing fur in some form or other ; let him calculate how many will pass in a shopping day, say eight hours, and he will arrive at a figure—*for one day only*—that will astonish him.

He will see furs worn that have come from the frozen North, the hills of Abyssinia, the wilds of Peru, the plains of China, the grass-lands of Australia, the regions of Central Europe, the steppes of Tartary, the Pribylov Islands, many parts of the United States of America, Asia Minor, Persia, England, Scotland, France—the list is endless.

Think, fair reader, the next time you assume a " fur "—be it the lordly sable or the lowly mole—think of the organization required to transfer those skins from their original wearers to your own fair shoulders. On your behalf your servants face death from cold, starvation, fatigue, or at the teeth and claws of the denizens of the wild. They face the sandstorms of the desert or

the blizzards of the Arctic ; they deal with savage races north, south, east, and west. They offer their fortitude, capital, brains, and artistic genius in the same quest. At one end of the chain is the hunter, striving against the most terrific hardships that can be conceived ; at the other, the designer, wooing Fashion's fickle fancy and knowing that, should Fortune look askance at him, the final result of the struggle may be nothing but Dead Sea fruit.

Fur trading is a most hazardous game, and many fortunes have been lost, particularly since the War, owing to sudden changes in fashion.

The old saying : " Furs, when wanted, are diamonds ; when not wanted, charcoal," was never so true as it is in this year of grace.

In the days of our grandmothers, that Golden Age for Great Britain—the Victorian—things were different. Furs and diamonds were both fixed assets, to be handed down from mother to daughter ; and any occasion that warranted the wearing of the family jewels ordained usually the assumption of the family furs.

Forty years ago the seal jacket was *the* thing, and a furrier would stock them in scores, all the same shape and differing but slightly from year to year. Nowadays, a furrier would not dream of stocking scores of seal jackets. In the first place, he could not afford it, and in the next, the modern woman requires something distinctive about a fur coat ; and to tell her that " this coat has been sold in hundreds " is to make a remark that, in these fastidious times, is not going to promote sales : far from it.

So much for the retailer's end ; but with every sympathy for the retailer, who at least lives and prospers (or fails) under civilized conditions, our sympathies go out to the man at the other end of the—in some cases—

10,000-mile chain: the man who actually gets the skins—the hunter or trapper—call him which you will; he is usually a combination of both.

And now with regard to these trappers, it will be useful to let the reader have an insight into the life and methods of the men on whom the fur trade, in the first instance, depends.

The geographical position of Canada causes it, together with Siberia, to be the chief fur-producing country in the world. The fur trade in the latter region has been so entirely disorganized by the War and the Soviet *régime*, that no useful purpose can be served by a description, nor could the details be accurate.

Canada, however, although somewhat—as what country was not?—disturbed by the European struggle, did not, at least, have to put up with invading armies or the sequestration of private property, and the trapper to-day proceeds on his task very much as he did up to 1914.

Nature, as we know, tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and equally strengthens the covering of fur-bearing animals against the unutterable cold of the Arctic regions. It is a truism that “the colder the climate, the better the fur,” and, consequently, “our lady of the snows” is extremely fortunate in having an annual harvest of skins, which for both quality and variety is unsurpassed in any other part of the globe.

Now with regard to the garnering of this harvest it must be remembered that Hudson Bay, which is to all intents and purposes the true centre of the hunting grounds, and to which gravitates the harvest of skins, is ice-locked for some eight months every year. In order, therefore, to get the precious skins from regions deficient in roads and railways, where the rivers when not frozen over are interrupted every few miles

by rushing rapids, over deep snow and in face of blizzards and an unbelievable cold ; where Man and Nature are equally savage, and where civilization is non-existent, an immense organization is necessary.

How immense is this organization—or rather organizations, for there are two of them, the Hudson's Bay Co. and Revillon Frères—will be described later on ; but, in the meantime, we want to trace the trade *ab initio*, so “ Let us now praise famous men,” albeit their fame does not penetrate into the salons of London, Paris, or New York, yet there in the Canadian wilds their names are as household words.

Like many other savages, the Canadian Indians held furs as their great assets, and with the more reason in that some such warm covering becomes a *sine quâ non* in a climate where 60 degrees of frost in winter is by no means unheard of.

As with the Germans, Gauls, and ancient Britons, skins were used as a means of barter between tribe and tribe, and attracted the attention of the white man early in the seventeenth century. By slow degrees, the pale face acquired the hunting lore of the redskin, until, about 1750, the white trapper, living with his life in his hand, owing to the incessant wars in which English, French, and Indians all participated, could hold his own at the chase with the aboriginal inhabitant.

Slowly, however, the white trappers died out, and at the present day the descendants of Rogers and Kit Carson are no longer to be found on the hunting trail.

The old Wood Rangers have practically disappeared : whether white men are “ softer ” nowadays is a subject for debate, but it is certain that the wild, wandering, exciting, solitary, and adventurous life of a trapper, with its perpetual struggle with the elements, wild

beasts, and savage men, no longer attracts the bold and adventurous spirits as of yore.

The Rangers have disappeared, but to replace them are the half-breeds—usually described as “breeds,”



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A “BREED” TRAPPER

who add to the knowledge of the red man the intelligence of the white and who are consequently by far the most skilful hunters.

Up to the 55th degree of North latitude (i.e. up to about the centre of the Hudson Bay) an abundance of furs is brought in by Indians. These aborigines are cunning hunters, but, as is so often the case, have lost

many of their hardier qualities through intercourse with the whites. They are liable to fits of intense laziness at times, and are consequently not to be relied on with any degree of certainty for their catches. Unfortunately they suffer much from the ravages of consumption, which, when one considers their almost entire disregard for the rules of hygiene, is hardly to be wondered at. The intense cold is a frequent cause of consumption, which is set up by exertion in temperatures of 60 to 100 degrees of frost. A hunter, or in fact any man, who *has* to travel when these intensely low temperatures prevail, breathes heavily and takes the frost itself into his lungs, with the resultant effect of freezing the edges of those organs.

If one's nose or ears get frostbitten, it is possible, by acting in time, to prevent their mortifying, but with the lungs it is another matter. A dry, hacking cough is set up, owing to the sloughing away of the dead lung tissue, and the sufferer falls into a rapid consumption, with an early death as its inevitable end.

In the more northern regions, extending up to and beyond the Arctic circle, the fur trade depends to a large extent on Eskimos.

These savages are extremely brave and hardy ; “ the survival of the fittest ” is no empty aphorism in the inhospitable regions of the frozen North. They are good hands at driving a bargain and, above all, excellent sailors. On land they derive much assistance, as do the majority of fur hunters, from their dogs, known farther south as “ huskies,” without whom locomotion—which, frequently, when your nearest neighbours are a hundred miles away, means life—would be impossible.

These three entirely different types—Half-breeds, Indians, and Eskimos—then, constitute the groups from which the professional trappers are drawn.

As to the amateur, it is a truism to state that 99 per cent or more of the inhabitants of Northern Canada dabble in furs in one way or another.

As furs are at their prime in winter, it is at the beginning of that season that the trapper sets out from his home in some small town on the frontiers of civilization, on his 2,000-mile tramp. He will probably be



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ESKIMOS WITH LOAD OF FURS AT OUTPOST

away nine months, and during by far the greater part of that time he will see no human being, and for companionship will have only his dog or dogs.

His equipment, for one setting out on such a journey, is of modest dimensions, consisting of a blanket, a small lean-to, moose pemmican, bacon, flour, tea, an axe, matches, firearms and ammunition, traps, and reindeer thong.

If he has a dog team, he may take frozen salmon also, but obviously he must depend on his own skill to obtain

the bulk of his food for himself and his four-footed companions.

Arrived at his hunting ground—and there is an unwritten law amongst trappers that prevents poaching—he forms camp, caches his provisions, and sets out on a fifty-mile round, setting his traps where skill and experience have taught him the most favoured localities lie. He lays them in an immense circle, and by the time the last one has been set, it will be incumbent on him to visit the first.

He may be lucky or unlucky ; possibly he has been winded by a wolverine or fisher, both of which animals have the pleasing habit, to them, of following up the trapper, eating the baits or such animals as are caught, and generally spoiling things. If a wolverine once gets on to a line of traps, the trapper must either kill the wolverine or abandon the ground. There is no other alternative.

On the other hand, he may get a few martens (or Canadian sables) ; a rare silver or black fox will cause him to rejoice ; and a good specimen of wolf is also greatly to be desired.

When he has trapped out one line, he gathers up his traps (he will already have skinned the catch, the flesh of which goes to feed his ever-hungry dogs), packs the skins on his sledge, and moves on. He will so time his journey that he arrives at an outpost of one of the great fur companies as his stock of provisions is getting low ; and there he sells his cargo for cash, food, and whatever else he requires.

In charge of the outpost, which is open only during a certain part of the year, will be a company's agent, either a "breed" or an Indian, and these men must naturally be good judges of skins "in the raw," which are very different things from the finished articles one sees

worn in the capitals of civilization. A good deal of the trade is still conducted by barter, as naturally in these remote wilds one must have food, clothing, and necessities. A pocketful of bank notes or dollars is of no use when the owner is fifty miles from the nearest food and a blizzard is coming on. Hence the necessity for barter.

An Indian trapper will journey to the hunting-grounds accompanied by his family ; the hunting-grounds get more and more remote as the years go on, owing to the advance, albeit slow, of civilization. There are still, however, areas of thousands of miles in which fur-bearing animals still range, both on dry land and in the huge marshy region known as " muskeg." It is difficult, however, to convey in print an idea as to the vastness of the wilds of the Canadian North-West, whence the best furs come. Mention has already been made of the trapper's 2,000-mile journey, with fifty-mile circles of traps at each camping ground ; and as trappers are numbered by the hundred, and each one traps on his own ground only, a dim and hazy idea of the enormous extent of the fur country is, by this means, arrived at. Imagine a wilderness four or five times as wide as the distance from Land's End to John O'Groats, and extending in length as far as is Fishguard from New York, and the extent of the hunting-grounds may be more or less visualized.

The Indian consequently travels equipped with supplies—which are usually furnished by a storekeeper of one of the fur companies on the credit of the furs that are to come—for a long exile. He will take his moose hide tepee, in addition to the stores previously enumerated, and make the journey northward as far as possible by canoe.

When the frost comes, preventing further progress

by water, he takes to his dog-sled drawn by a team of "huskies." He has a big advantage over the solitary white or "breed" trapper, in that when he forms camp his wife and papooses remain at the wigwam, and carry out the freezing of fish for dog food, and other domestic duties, whilst he is away setting and tending his traps. He sets about 150 in a fifty-mile round, of which about a dozen are of steel, intended for the smaller animals, whilst for the larger denizens of the wild the Indian uses the deadfall trap. This trap is very similar to what is known in England as the "figure 4" trap, and is so contrived that, on the bait being taken, a heavy log falls on the animal's back, usually killing it at once.

When the entire round of traps has been laid, the hunter will occupy three days in visiting them; and, if he has a son of ten years of age or more, he takes the boy with him in order to instruct him in the ways of the hunt.

When tending traps, the Indian carries as little as possible—his rifle, a small axe, tea, pipe and tobacco, and a kettle; other food on his dog-sled and one blanket is all the native hunter asks for in the coldest weather. He manages to keep warm at nights by putting up a lean-to and making his fire on the lee side of it; he then sleeps between the fire and the lean-to. Naturally he makes camp in as sheltered a position as possible.

In addition to the danger of being mauled by wild animals—many a solitary trapper has been eaten by wolves—considerable risks are run from the behaviour of the "huskies."

These intensely strong and useful, and at the same time, fierce and quarrelsome animals, are a cross between the dog and the wolf, the dog predominating. Volumes could be written on their intelligence, but they have to

be ruled with an iron discipline. They are prone to dash off without warning in chase of a wolf or any other game ; and the plight of a hunter, in the Canadian winter, seeing his dogs and sled, with everything upon which he depends for sustenance, careering madly away down the frozen river or through the forest, is one to



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HUSKIES WAITING TO BE FED (NOTE DEPTH OF SNOW)

be pitied. If he is unsuccessful in finding his dogs and sled, he is doomed.

The Indians' "huskies" are not too well cared for in the summer and, being in a semi-starved condition, will and do eat almost anything. Anyone camping near Indians in summer time must beware of hungry "huskies," which roam about in wolfish packs. The white man, as a rule, is kind to his dogs, knowing that on them his life depends in winter, and he is repaid

by a semi-savage affection ; but the Indian leaves them more or less to fend for themselves during his months of rest ; he is quite careless of the morrow.

With regard to the Eskimo trapper or hunter, he obtains a large portion of his furs from the denizens of



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ESKIMO WOMAN AND CHILD

the sea. In the frozen oceans live numerous fur-bearers, such as seal, hair seal, and sea otter.

The most productive and least dangerous animal to hunt, although intense hardship has to be undergone in its pursuit, is the hair seal or phoque. This animal, which differs considerably from the fur seal, is frequently seen in British waters ; but in the Arctic, when the thaw comes, it congregates on the loose drift ice in

shoals of 20,000 to 30,000 at a time. This is the Eskimos' chance, and in their kayaks, those quaint boats in which their owners on festive occasions turn complete somersaults under the waves, they wage a relentless war on the hair seals. Landing on the icebergs, they attack the younger and more valuable animals, armed only with a club.

A blow on the nose is quite sufficient to kill a young hair seal at once ; but the older animals, however, who frequently attack the hunters, must be dispatched with a rifle bullet. The old bulls, who are particularly ferocious, weigh from 14 to 16 cwt., and are a serious proposition to tackle.

The slaughtered animals are cut up there and then, and the skins and blubber conveyed to the nearest camp, and thence by dog-sled to a fur company's outpost.

Without the hair seal, the Esquimaux would perish, as in the frozen regions an enormous amount of animal fat is required to sustain human life. The animal also furnishes them with clothing and fuel, practically all their lighting and heating coming from melted blubber.

During the harder weather, the Eskimo hunter displays the patience of Job. Once having located a hole in the ice where seals come up to breathe, he makes a seat of ice blocks and, swathed in furs, particularly round his feet, sits there watching and waiting, if necessary, for days. His faculties enable him to tell of the approach of a seal, when he poises a long, thin harpoon, and, as the seal rises to breathe, one thrust transfixes it, and in a minute or two he is *en route* for his snow hut, dragging the frozen carcass of his catch behind him over the ice.

So much for the *modus operandi* of the hunters ; we have followed the " breed," Indian, and Eskimo in their hunting and their journeys to the fur companies'

outposts. It now becomes necessary to study the organization that operates these outposts and brings the skins from the wilds of Canada to the heart of European and American civilization.

It has already been mentioned that there are two big fur companies in Canada, the Hudson's Bay Co. and Revillon Frères. The former, which is by far the older, and which, in its day, was the most powerful private organization in the world, is described in another part of this work ; but the methods of the two great companies, so far as the purchase and transport of furs are concerned, are very similar.

Both organizations have big depots in Hudson Bay itself, and the determining factor in each case is the long winter during which the Bay is inaccessible to shipping. The only outlet to the Bay is the long Hudson Strait, to the north of Labrador ; and once this passage is blocked by pack ice, the Bay itself is sealed. Hence, anything that has to be done in the ten weeks or so that communications are possible has to be done with speed, and a vast amount of " staff work " is called for.

Steamboats, strongly built and capable of standing the strain of cruising in Arctic seas, push their way through the drift ice the moment that it is humanly possible to do so. Their holds are loaded with all things needed in the wilds—food, ammunition and rifles, axes, and an *olla podrida* of stores which have to be dumped at the main depots without loss of time.

Once the holds are clear, they are reloaded with the precious furs which have arrived at the depots by means to be described, and the steamers leave on their return voyage before the ice closes the only maritime route.

The main depots communicate with the chief "posts" (which may be described as base posts) by means of small steamers. The base posts, as their name implies, act as bases for the ordinary posts which are installed farther inland. Communications, again, are made as far as possible by water, sailing barges of peculiar rig,



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FUR STEAMER IN HUDSON STRAITS

and occasional motor launches attached to the base posts, being the means of transport.

In the old days of the Hudson's Bay Co. these base posts were called, and in reality were, "forts." Strong places were an absolute necessity, for it must be remembered that wars between the British and French were incessant during the eighteenth century, and the Indians fought now on one side, now on the other. Hence the earlier fur posts were "forts" in the true sense of the word, and although the necessity has departed, the old names remain; and in London to this day, at the H.B.

sales, can be seen packages marked Y.F., meaning York Fort, one of the oldest and most important H.B. posts, now termed York factory.

However, nowadays, "post" is the word, but the trade is the same, whether the post be fortified or not.

A base post acts as a depot for a certain number of



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INTERIOR OF FUR POST (NOTE GOODS FOR
BARTER ON COUNTER)

ordinary posts, i.e. at the base post are concentrated all the provisions, munitions, and stores for these ordinary posts; here are kept all their accounts, and their collections of skins, leathers, oil, ivory, and anything else that may be sent in, in the way of trade.

It seems strange to think of clerical work being carried on in a temperature of 80 degrees of frost, but both the big fur organizations have perforce large clerical staffs

at their base posts ; and, although the idea of casting up figures and keeping ledgers 500 miles or more from the nearest town, in a rough log hut, with the howling of wolves as an accompaniment seems rather unusual ; still, the clerks seem to enjoy the life. It is, when one considers it, somewhat different from a London or Paris counting-house, and one has in the slack time numerous opportunities of hunting, fishing, and boating, such as do *not* fall to the lot of dwellers in civilized communities.

The Great War was described by an officer as “ months of insufferable boredom, punctuated by moments of intense fear ” ; although this hardly describes life at a fur post, it may be paraphrased as “ months of deadly monotony, punctuated by moments of intense energy ” —these moments being when the stores from one side and the furs from the other come in.

Farther inland from these larger posts are smaller ones known as ordinary posts, which act as go-betweens for the base posts, and those still farther afield known as outposts or flying posts.

The latter, which are open only for a short time and at a certain season of the year, establish direct contact with the hunters and trappers, who bring their catches to the outposts and obtain their cash or goods in exchange.

Transport between the flying and ordinary posts is done when possible by canoe ; in winter, by sleds drawn by the highly essential and efficient “ huskies.”

A word as to these means of locomotion. When a convoy starts in winter, a man of great strength goes first to break the trail, as it is termed, i.e. by means of his snowshoes he packs down the soft snow sufficiently to allow the dogs and sleds to follow on this prepared surface, otherwise they would sink in the snow and make no progress. At the head of each team is the

pilot dog, who is invariably the strongest and most intelligent of the lot. He attains and keeps his position only by being ready, at all times, to do battle for it. On the march, or "mush" as it is termed in Canada, he acts as guide, avoids crevasses and bad places, and, generally speaking, does his best to hustle things along. A good pilot dog is worth almost anything that his owner cares to ask, and it would have to be a very strong inducement indeed that would cause such a dog and his master to part.

In summer-time the greatest possible use is made of waterways. Cargoes are limited somewhat in weight in certain districts, such as Churchill and Athabasca, owing to the numerous rapids and small falls met with.

The boats will be towed up-river, but on arrival at a rapid, what is known as a "portage" has to be made, i.e. boat and cargo are drawn ashore, and the whole lot divided up and carried by land past the rapid, on the crew's backs. As a portage may be anything from a hundred yards to four miles in length, the labour involved is enormous. Occasionally, white men's "huskies" will take a turn on the tow line, when their great strength (a good "husky" will weigh 140 lb.) is by no means to be despised.

Coming down-stream is done on the quieter rivers by Indian birchbark canoes, but these craft are not strong enough for the turbulent Saskatchewan; and scows and York boats, constructed of stronger material than bark, are employed on that and other dangerous rivers. Scows, which are broad-bowed boats, are built to float down-stream, and at the end of the voyage are broken up. Occasionally they are broken up *en route*, and the whole precious cargo of furs lost in some angry "rapid." York boats are larger and carry sail.

The crew pole down-stream and pole and tow up ;

whilst on the lakes, which are in many instances inland seas, e.g. Lake Winnipeg or the Great Slave Lake, seamanship of no mean order is called for.

In the fur country of the Canadian Rockies, transport is accomplished by pack horse ; and there is still one other means adopted by the individual hunter, viz., man-back, which is the oldest of any.

The chain is thus completed : skins to hunters, hunters to outposts, thence by dog-train to ordinary posts ; from these to base posts, from base posts to depots, depots to steamers, and these latter to London direct or via Montreal.

Supplies go the reverse way, and as far as possible by water.

Mention must be made of the railway running from Le Pas to Churchill on Hudson Bay, but owing to climatic conditions it frequently cannot be used, and another railway is well advanced to connect up Moose Factory with Montreal.

Transport is *the* great difficulty, and that this difficulty has been so efficiently overcome redounds to the credit of the great fur companies.

The Western centre of the trade is Edmonton, Alberta. The rise of this town, partly due to the discovery of gold in the Klondike, has been phenomenal. Where, in 1890, were the H.B. fort and a few wooden shacks, now extends a modern city with big department stores, tramways and railways complete. To Edmonton come numerous trappers and small fur traders, whilst the big fur companies have immense modern shops and warehouses, as they have both branched out considerably from the mere buying and selling of fur-skins and now supply anything from a matchbox to a motor boat.

The small fur traders have an extremely risky time. An essential of the fur trade in Canada is the giving

of credit. The Indian, or "breed," in the main is a thriftless individual, and before he can set out on his hunt requires to be supplied with stores and necessities on the promise to pay for them with his catch.

In the majority of instances, he will keep his promise ; but supposing a bad year for furs comes along, and trappers reckon one bad year in every seven, his catch will not pay for his credits. Then if he does not get a further advance to take him through another year, he will not bring the results of his hunt when the good years arrive. Not many small traders can afford this sort of thing, and it is easy to see how the H.B. Co. was enabled to remain the undisputed king of the fur trade for so long after the relinquishment of its charter, some fifty years ago.

The word CAPITAL supplies the answer ; the only small fur traders who managed to keep going were those who never went in debt to their banks or wholesale suppliers in order to make their advances to the Indians.

These traders managed to keep their heads above water, but every year saw one or more go under in the unequal struggle. Of course, the profits were large, but the risks were too great. Many a small trader has been ruined through losing his boat containing the bulk of his capital, represented by stores or skins, in some rapid. Others, having advanced a year's credit to the Indians, struck a bad fur year, and getting nothing in return lacked the means to carry on for another twelvemonth ; but, as a sea which will engulf a skiff is only a millpond to a battleship, so these incidents affected the H.B. Co. not a bit, and their power was not seriously challenged until 1902, when an organization as powerful and as wealthy as the H.B. Co. itself came in ; and nowadays where you find a H.B.

post, you will find a Revillon post not too far away. Their rivalry can be likened somewhat to that existing between Oxford and Cambridge or Yale and Harvard.

The effect of this rivalry has been good for the fur trade. Barter, with its obvious attendant evils, has been done away with as far as possible, and the trappers are told, and in fact made, to exercise a little forethought with regard to their supplies. Furs are now bought for cash at the majority of the posts, and supplies sold also for cash. The result is that while, owing to the lessened output, prices of furs have gone up enormously, prices of provisions are much lower than in the days of barter ; and the hunters can make an income sufficient to exist in what for them is affluence.

Naturally the older company did not take this attack on its monopoly lying down, and for some years matters were, to put it politely, somewhat strained ; but, as time wore on, things simmered down, and to-day, one is pleased to chronicle, the servants of both companies are friends, both in the wilds of Canada and the markets of London.

No work on the fur trade can be considered complete without a more than passing reference to the celebrated Hudson's Bay Co. Although a well-known axiom states that " trade follows the flag," it is almost equally true that, in so far as British history is concerned, the " flag followed trade." A fur-trading expedition sent to Newfoundland in 1578 ultimately led to the founding of that, " our oldest colony." The East India Co., incorporated by Queen Elizabeth in 1600, was eventually the cause of India's being added to British possessions, whilst the Hudson's Bay Co., granted a charter in 1670 by Charles II, enabled vast tracts of hitherto undiscovered country in North America to be added to the

British Crown. It is here necessary to remind the reader that the Norsemen were the first discoverers of Canada. This at first sight seems extraordinary when we remember that the ships of the Vikings were little more than open boats ; many a warship to-day carries two boats which are fully as large as the Vikings' ships, but no one would dream of crossing the Atlantic in them. The Norsemen, however, went by the Northern route, i.e. via Iceland and Greenland. They did a little trade with the natives—presumably Eskimo—whom they termed Skraelings, but evidently the voyage was too severe for even those iron men ; and history is mute as to whether the first expedition, which took place some time about the end of the tenth century A.D., was ever repeated.

Columbus landed in the West Indies in May, 1492, but Cabot landed on the mainland of Labrador in 1497, both explorers making an effort to reach Asia ! Thereafter numerous small expeditions were made to Canada, and the fur trade opened up ; the French, however, made a strong move for the capture of the Canadian trade under the aegis of that far-seeing statesman Richelieu ; and the leader of the expedition, de Champlain, in 1608, established a fur post at Montreal ; and from that day to this immense fur depots have had their being in that city.

It was not for another sixty years that Britain made any real effort ; but then Prince Rupert, the hero of many a dashing charge, who subsequently fought at sea and did quite a lot of sea trading in the West Indies, was attracted by the openings for trade that Canada presented, and got his royal relative Charles II to grant him and his associates a charter, giving them the monopoly of the trade and commerce—and practically everything else—in the lands and waters that lay

within Hudson Straits. Judging from the maps of the period, nobody knew much about what lands or waters lay in the prescribed area, and the granting of this charter by the King rather discounts that bitter epitaph composed on him by the Earl of Rochester—

Here lies our sovereign lord the King,
Whose word no man relies on ;
He never said a foolish thing,
And never did a wise one.

If ever a king did a wise action, Charles II did when he granted the charter to the Hudson's Bay Co.

The powers granted the Company were immense—royal, in fact ; whilst, in addition, the forces of the Crown were to assist the Company in carrying out their projects when called upon to do so.

The charter still exists in the London office of the Company (a quaint document), and was retained for some 200 years, until 1869 in fact, when the Canadian Government took over many of the H.B. powers upon terms.

In spite of the British efforts, the French had too long a start, and the fur trade remained largely in their hands for over a hundred years ; not until the conquest of Canada were the Company enabled to take full advantage of their powers. Many times, in these earlier days, their forts were taken by the French or their Indian allies. Trading posts without number were looted and burnt, and their occupants scalped. Ships laden with stores and furs were captured by both parties ; in short, a fur trader in those days had more excitement than was absolutely healthy.

The first posts established after the charter were James Bay, Moose, and York, and it is a notable fact that the early success of the Company was largely due to two French explorers, Radisson and Groseilliers.

Being in an unexplored, unmapped country, the earlier days of the Company had perforce to be, in some measure at least, devoted to exploration as well as exploitation. The names of the explorers are perpetuated all over Canada in rivers, towns, etc.

Other formidable rivals during the earlier days were the Dutch East India Co., and, when the foreign rivals had been driven out, the very existence of the H.B. Co. was threatened by another fur trading company known as the North-West Co., which came into existence in 1790, and waged a bitter war against the rival organization ; it was war at times in every sense of the word, fighting and looting being incessant. R. M. Ballantyne, who was a servant of the H.B. Co. for some years, has given vivid accounts of these encounters in his books.

Eventually the two companies amalgamated in 1821, and the whole territory was reorganized in a way that more than doubled its efficiency. The Company practically governed the greater portion of Canada, dispensed the " high, middle and low justice," had its own laws and regulations, its own fleet, and did the bulk of the trade and transport of the country. Its servants acted as judges, soldiers, traders, and doctors ; and, in fact, until the abrogation of the charter in 1869, it was the most powerful private organization probably that the world has ever seen.

There is a drawing in the *Illustrated London News* of 21st June, 1845, representing the H.B. ships at Gravesend, prior to their departure on their annual voyage to the fur posts in Canada.

Huge quantities of skins also come from the U.S.A., but, the climate not being so rigorous, the collection of the furs, although a highly important and lucrative undertaking, is not attended with the same romantic

circumstances as prevail farther north. Fur traders in the States are legion and are not, as yet, under that control that the U.S. Department of Agriculture would like to impose. Trapping takes place in a more or less indiscriminate manner and adequate legal protection for the animals has become a necessity. Many of the present game laws are considered defective, with the result that, although anyone trapping in the close season is liable to fine if caught by the game wardens, large numbers of "unprime," i.e. caught out of season, skins come to market with the utmost regularity. The big trading companies are in strict agreement to enforce these game laws, both in Canada and the U.S.A., by refusing to purchase unprime skins or the skins of protected animals. Obviously the future of the trade depends largely on the scientific conservation of the fur-bearing animals.

Most furs are taken between November and February ; the musk rat, however, is at its best from March to May.

In Quebec and Eastern Canada the farmers trap during the winter ; they are harder to trade with than the professional trappers, as they get prices from New York, and knowing very little of the real grades of fur imagine that everything they catch is " best quality."

John Jacob Astor, in 1808, laid the foundations of the Astor millions in fur trading. In that year he started the American Fur Co., and in 1810 the Pacific Fur Co., subsequently transferring the latter to the North-West Co.

The majority of the U.S.A. fur-bearing animals, such as musk rat, opossum, skunk, rabbit and raccoon, are of a small size, but what they lack in physical proportions is amply compensated by their enormous numbers.

The basin of the Mississippi, with the swamps of Louisiana, produce small fur-bearing animals in myriads,

their capture affording a livelihood to thousands of trappers, and the marketing of the skins forms a highly important item in the trade, both external and internal, of the U.S.A.

Enough has been said to demonstrate the extent of the fur trade in North America, and some reference to the Asiatic side of the business may here be made.

China, owing to the disorganization attendant on incessant civil wars, has lost a large proportion of her fur trade. One is glad to state, however, that, with more peaceful times, exports are looking up, large quantities of furs are purchased by European agents at the ports, chiefly at Shanghai, whilst a considerable trade is done with Japan.

The Chinese fur dealers classify their goods into *hsi mao*. and *tso mao*, the former corresponding nearly to the English word "furs," and the latter to "skins." To the *hsi mao* class belong sable, otter, seal, beaver, squirrel, and fox; and to the *tso mao*, dog, wolf, sheep, and goat.

The Himalaya district produces a certain number of large fur bearers, such as leopard, snow leopard, snow lynx, and tiger, which are hunted by the Gurkhas and the skins purchased by Indian merchants operating from Almora, whilst the bulk of the Central Asiatic furs are despatched by camel, donkey, and bullock transport to Peshawar, thence by rail to Bombay, where they are shipped to London and New York.

As already stated, the Siberian trade has been quite disorganized under the Bolshevik *régime*. When the Communists discovered, at long last, that, despite their altruistic ideas, capital was a necessity to any state, they so arranged matters that the harvest of skins (and the resultant cash profit) came under Government control,

so that nowadays all furs exported from Russia are, *ipso facto*, state property. This trade, although in nothing like the pre-war volume, is now important and increasing.

Central Asia, up to the Bolshevik invasion of Bokhara, was, and is again, a fruitful ground for obtaining what are known as Astrakhan or Persian lamb skins. The trader in search of this well-known and popular fur has to combat a climate, in strong contrast to that of Canada or Siberia, of an almost tropical nature. Establishing his base of operations in Bokhara town, he dispatches numerous small caravans north, south, east, and west across the deserts, to trade in the villages with the various Turkoman tribes. The idea of camels and sandstorms, heat, and white turbans in connection with the fur trade appears, at first sight, to be grotesque, but it is an assured fact; and the best way to get the best skins is to go to the trouble of fetching them. In contrast with the taciturnity of the Red Indian, the Turkoman is voluble and a great hand at bargaining.

"Dinner lubricates business" in Central Asia as in England, and the trader is invited to an enormous "pilaff," washed down with glasses of tea. Thereafter business begins, and the chaffering is conducted for hours. When the deal is complete, payment must be made in cash—no paper money for the Turkoman! He understands gold or silver, and will accept nothing else.

The caravans have to be on their guard against marauding bands, for

. . . the good and simple plan
That they should take who have the power
And they should keep who can,

is strongly believed in on the Central Asiatic steppes.

The skins arrive in Europe via Afghanistan and Pesháwar or Persia and Bagdad, packed in bales containing as many as 400 skins. The packing of these bales is an eye-opener to Europeans. The skins are pressed together, tied, enshrouded in soaking wet wash leather, tied up again and again with soaped ropes, and finally stitched in sacking. Only a native can re-pack such a bale once it has been opened, and it is simply marvellous to see the ingenious way in which the skins—unwieldy as Persian lambs are—are reduced to order, compressed, and packed. Physical strength of no mean order is called for to accomplish the task with any success.

Australia owes much of her trade in furs to two animals which are not indigenous to the country, viz. the rabbit and the fox. The latter animal was imported to kill off the rabbits and is now becoming a pest—in its turn. Millions of rabbit skins and hundreds of thousands of opossums are annually shipped from Sydney and Melbourne to all parts of the world, particularly Europe and the U.S.A. As in other countries, the more valuable animals have to be protected by means of game laws, otherwise their extinction, owing to the greed of the trappers, would be merely a matter of time.

New Zealand has of recent years become a producer of opossums (most of the original stock of which were imported from Tasmania) and the rabbits from that country are, from a furrier's point of view, of very good quality.

CHAPTER III

FUR-BEARING ANIMALS

FUR (Old French, *forre*, *fuerre*, a sheath) is the short, fine, soft hair of certain animals. Many people are ignorant of the difference between "fur" and "hair" on the various species.

The "fur" is what may be described as the "down" of a skin, and in many instances this down is protected by a much longer and stiffer covering called "hair." For example, when one sees a natural brown musquash garment, the top hairs are in view; but the same skin, when dyed to imitate seal, will have had the top hairs removed, exposing the soft under-fur.

Horses and cows have no fur, only hair; and, in general, when the animal is only hair-covered, the hide is tanned and used for leather, although some three or four years ago there was an amazing vogue for such haired skins as calf, kid, and antelope, which have no fur on them at all, and very little hair worthy of the name, but—*que voulez vous ?*—'twas the fashion!

To give a description of all the fur-bearing animals would require a good-sized natural history volume; but, for the purposes of this work, a few facts on the more important species should serve the necessary purpose.

Badger (Lat. *meles*, Fr. *blaireau*). This animal, with slight differences in bodily size, and also the quality of the fur, is to be found in both the Old and the New World. It has pronounced hair, tipped white, 2 in. to 4 in. long, which, especially with Russian badgers, is used for shaving brushes, and which, when left on the skin, renders the fur particularly hard-wearing.

The hair is a kind of grey; the under-fur, brown,

and all badgers have a peculiar white marking on the head and back. It is a nocturnal animal, carnivorous and hibernating.

In England it still exists, although, on account of its retiring disposition, seldom seen ; it lives in a burrow, and has been known to occupy a fox-earth. It is intensely brave, and in the bad old days had to put up with much cruelty from so-called "sportsmen," who used to set dogs at it after previously extracting its teeth ; hence the term "to badger anybody," i.e. to bully them incessantly, as the same badger would be attacked as often as its owner liked. Previously in England it was known as "Brock," the name being perpetuated in such examples as Brockley, Brockenhurst, etc.

The English badger is about 2 ft. 3 in. in length, and weighs about 30 lb.

The American badger produces the best fur ; the Chinese and Japanese are coarser and inferior in texture and the creatures are somewhat smaller than the American animal.

The Chinese variety is frequently dyed. Its flesh is eaten by the Celestials, who consider its hams a great dainty.

Bear (Lat. *ursus*, Fr. *ours*). Four kinds of bear are in common use in the fur trade, i.e. Black, Brown, Grizzly, and White.

The family is distributed all over the earth ; all four are found in Canada, the white or Polar in the Far North, the grizzly along nearly the whole range of the Rockies ; the brown is also found in Europe, and the black in the U.S.A.

The largest is the Polar bear ; skins have been taken measuring 10 ft. or more in length. The animal spends a good deal of time in the sea, where it hunts seals and fish, and has been known to attack the walrus.

Polar bears are frequently taken in the sea by trading

steamers ; on the ice they are formidable creatures to attack.

Nelson, when a boy of 14, had the temerity to attack a Polar bear, and but for the luck of the British Navy would hardly have escaped with his life. They are a source of trouble to explorers, eating their *caches* of provisions and destroying what they do not eat. The Eskimos are very fond of bear meat, and are stated to kill the animals in a most original way. An Eskimo with a spear and arrows is no match for a Polar bear, weighing from 500 to 800 lb., so he takes several pieces of whalebone pointed at either end, coils them like clock springs, and encloses each in a small lump of blubber. A minute in the cold turns the blubber solid, and these balls are dropped in the way of an oncoming bear. He examines, tastes, and bolts the succulent morsels ; thereafter he feels a pain, and when very sick is easily speared.

There are some very fine Polar bears in the London Zoo, but so far it has not been found possible to rear cubs either there or in any Continental menagerie.

Many cubs have been born in captivity, but they invariably die in a few days of, apparently, a galloping consumption.

White bear skins, the leather of which is very thick and solid, are mostly used as rugs. The fur is cream or yellow in colour.

The grizzly bear, known to hunters as " Uncle Eph," is the most formidable of the tribe, and will cheerfully hunt the hunter. It is reputed to be intensely cunning and, being 8 ft. long and armed with claws $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. to 5 in. in length, is a difficult proposition to tackle. To wear a collar of grizzly claws is the ambition of the young Indian, as the assumption of this ornament denotes that he has slain the bear single-handed. The name " grizzly " denotes the colour of the fur, which varies

from pale grey to brown grey. The Latin name of this animal may be translated the "grisly bear," *ursus horribilis*, which is a sufficient tribute to its ferocity.

This fur is mostly employed in the manufacture of motor and floor rugs.

The brown bear is a synonym for the Russian bear, which, in addition to Russia, is found all over Europe. It once inhabited the British Isles, but the last specimen was reported in 1057.

The dancing bears that one used to see, accompanied by swarthy Basques, were brown bears, and the same species that were formerly "baited," i.e. like the badger, attacked by dogs for "sport." Although described as "brown" in colour, they are somewhat akin to the grizzly.

The American brown bear, sometimes described as the cinnamon bear from its colour, is merely a variety of the black bear. This animal is much smaller than the others—its length, as a rule, not exceeding 6 ft.—and is found all over the North American continent. The caps of the Guards in the British Army are made of this fur, dyed black ; and it is also used for muffs and stoles, and as trimming. Although all bears are omnivorous, this species is more of a vegetarian than the others. It is not ferocious, and its flesh is very good eating.

Beaver. The crest of the coat of arms of the Dominion of Canada is a testimony to the immense influence this animal, the largest of the rodents, has had on the development of that country. In the earlier days of the fur traders, the beaver was the standard of barter ; as an example, a gun was worth as many beaver skins as, piled up, would reach from stock to muzzle when the gun was held upright on the ground ; hence the specially made long-barrelled guns that are still to be found in the wilds of the Canadian North-West.

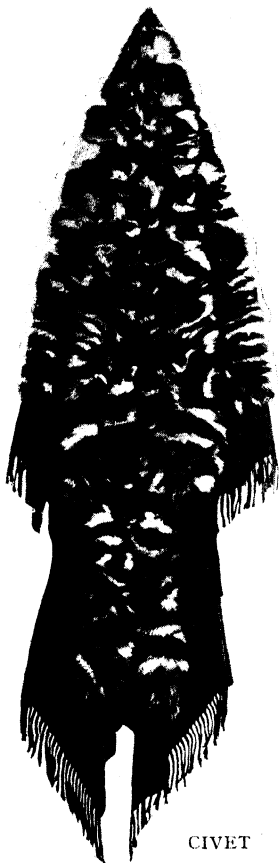
The beaver was a great attraction to the whites, and supplied the Indians with food, clothing, and wealth ; and up to the year 1839 the fur was used almost exclusively in the manufacture of hats—hence the old term *castor* (Latin and French for beaver) applied as a slang expression to a top hat.

The animal is from 1 ft. to 3 ft. in length, and has a tail which resembles a paddle. It was thought that beavers used these tails as trowels in the construction of their well-known dams, but their real use is that of a rudder when the animal is swimming, whilst slapping them on the water is the alarm signal to the tribe.

The fur is of a chestnut shade and the under-fur grey, but of a beautiful softness and texture. It is rather heavy for coats, but is largely used for smaller fur garments, gloves, and caps. The animal formerly lived in England, where, the Rev. J. G. Wood states, it was last seen in 1188, but on the Continent it is still to be found on the Rhone, Elbe, Danube, and Euphrates, and occasionally in Norway and Russia ; whilst, in addition to Canada, it is found in the U.S.A. as far south as Mexico. It is now protected under game laws in the whole of North America.

Cat. It is only in recent years that the domestic or house cat has appeared in the sale-rooms in any large quantities, but with the disappearance of several of the once common fur-bearing animals, the fur of the house cat is gradually becoming of some importance for manufacturing purposes. Other varieties of cat, however, have long been in use, e.g. some twenty to twenty-five years back a favourite lining to men's coats was described as genette—this was a black cat of either Russian or German origin. Wild cat skins, which differ in no important particulars from the domestic variety, were also used for gloves and foot-muffs, whilst

the striking civet cat has been popular for years. There is also a Chinese civet, which is rather a misleading name,



CIVET

as whilst the ordinary civet fur somewhat resembles skunk with thin, white markings—in fact, it is called the little striped skunk—the Chinese variety is larger and lighter in colour, whilst the fur is much longer and rougher than that of the civet cat. The handsome tiger cat was formerly sold in fair quantities, and the leopard cat is still frequently put up for auction. The two latter animals inhabit West and East Africa.

Chinchilla. The most beautiful and delicate fur in existence has become of increasing rarity of recent years, whilst its price has gone up to an incredible extent. There are three varieties, known as Peru (or real chinchilla), Bolivia, and Plata (or bastard chinchilla). The habitat of these animals, as may be surmised from the nomenclature, is in South America. Their capture has been carried out with

so little regard to the future that, but for the close time which has now been imposed, the

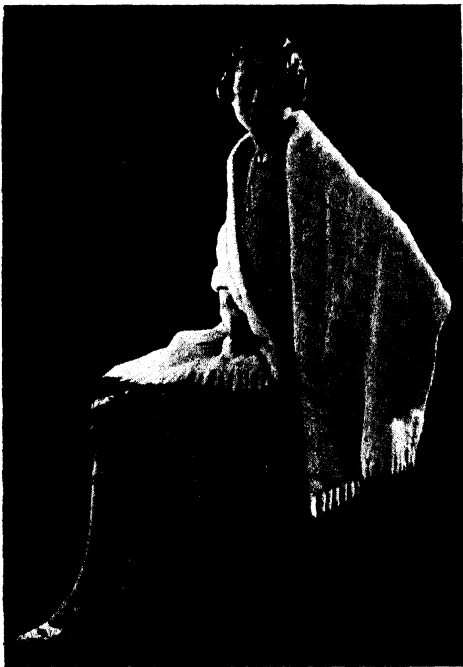
chinchilla would be extinct. The fur is a beautiful slate grey with delicate dark markings, and the leather is almost as thin as tissue paper. The writer, on his first introduction to the fur trade, some thirty years ago, bought bastard chinchillas at 6d. a skin. The price to-day of similar skins is £5 or more, whilst real chinchilla is worth almost anything up to £60, assuming in either case that any skins are to be obtained. It is questionable whether, if the whole of the trade were raked through to-day, a sufficient quantity of skins could be found to make a coat, and if the search were successful the price would be fabulous. The animal varies from 7 in. to 9 in. in length, and is a vegetarian. The chief difference between real and bastard chinchilla lies in the length of the hairs, Peru skins having hair up to an inch in length, whilst the bastard chinchillas are shorter. This fur requires treating with the utmost care, as it takes but little friction to spoil it irretrievably.

Dog. As used in the fur trade the term usually means China dog, of which considerable numbers are imported, either as skins or in the shape of mats, and as a rule dressed.

Very little is known of the animal in the Western world, although the Chinese make a business of breeding it and use an immense number for lining robes. The fur is rough and of various colours, and the flesh is used for food in the Far East.

Ermine. This is probably the most celebrated fur in the world. (See "Furs Throughout the Ages.") Ermine fur is really the winter dress of the stoat. A peculiarity of many animals and birds is the great change that takes place in their natural covering on the approach of winter. The stoat, a ferocious member of the weasel tribe, is light brown (with a white chest) during the summer months; but with the arrival of

winter the brown colour disappears and the animal becomes white, with the exception of the tip of the tail, which, winter and summer, is black. This change of



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ERMINE

colour is Nature's camouflage, acting both as a protection to the animal from its enemies and as a means to enable it to approach its prey unseen. The stoat is devoid of fear, and has a savage lust of killing for killing's sake.

It may here be remarked that most of the fur-bearing animals exist on the motto "kill or be killed," and the beautiful ermine, so long an appanage of royalty, is in life a most bloodthirsty little scoundrel, savage and cruel.

It inhabits Europe, Siberia, China, and Canada, and the farther north you go, the purer and whiter the skins.

The fur is short and close ; the animal is about 10 in. long, and the skins are usually sold in "timbers," i.e. "forties."

It is a good hard-wearing fur, but prone to go yellow with age ; this yellowness may be largely avoided by keeping the fur, when not in use, in a dark place. When spotted with black, it is used in the robes of the peerage, and is then termed miniver. It has always been in favour for the wear of children of the well-to-do, and is employed with considerable artistic and contrasting effect as a trimming to other furs, such as sable, seal, mole, or dyed musquash, also for wraps and stoles.

Enterprising furriers, in an attempt to paint the lily, have dyed it brown—to represent the stoat's summer dress—and even black. Large numbers of **Chinese Weasels**, which are very similar to ermine, but smaller and khaki-brown in colour, are exported from China yearly. Their quality is inferior.

Fisher. This creature, which inhabits Canada, certain parts of the United States, and parts of Northern India, is misnamed, as it does not fish. It is believed that it derived its name from its ingenious habit of following up a trapper and eating the fish bait used. It is a kind of large polecat or marten, and is about 2 ft. to 3 ft. long, being thus the largest of the marten tribe. It usually makes a nest from 30 ft. to 40 ft. above the ground, and is intensely active in its movements, being able to run down the marten, hare, and raccoon. It is also supposed to attack and eat the porcupine, which is not an

animal easily overcome. The fur of the fisher is a rich dark brown, and the long hairs are practically black ; the tail, too, is a handsome ornament, ranging from a foot to a foot and a half in length. Prior to the Great War, numbers of the skins were taken by the Russian trade ; nowadays a good many are disposed of in France and America.

As a handsome and hard-wearing fur, fisher ranks second to none of the marten tribe, but for some inexplicable reason it has never been very popular in this country.

Fitch. This is the furrier's name for the polecat, also known as the foul marten, from its pungent odour.

Formerly very common all over England, it is now comparatively rare in this country, chiefly owing to the hatred of gamekeepers, for the animal plays havoc among young birds. Large numbers are to be found in Europe and Siberia. It is about a foot long, and in colour is black and yellow (termed German fitch—a misnomer) or black and cream (known as white or Russian fitch). Along the middle of the back the hair is long and very dark and shining, whilst the lighter colouring prevails on the under part of the body. Fitch heads are often seen on Scottish "sporrans" ; when the price was lower " Russian " fitch was often dyed sable colour and made into muffs and ties.

Fox. There are numerous varieties of fox in common use in the fur trade. Space forbids more than a passing mention of the principal ones, but foxes are found all over the world ; and, though the English red fox never comes into the sale-room, the same cannot be said of the Australian, Canadian, European, or Russian species. Foxes range in colour from pure white to almost equally pure black, with numerous grey, red, and blue varieties. The black fox, usually seen in a made-up state, is a red

or white fox dyed, as a naturally pure black fox is both rare and expensive.

Blue Fox. This is not blue but rather a slate colour. It is a small fox, not very plentiful and, consequently, not too cheap. It is frequently imported from Norway, the Scandinavian traders collecting from Greenland and the Arctic, and passing on the skins to London or Copenhagen. It is not very common in Canada, and the Alaska skins, as a rule, fetch the best prices. Alaska skins frequently come from fox farms. (See "Fur-farming" in this work.) The fur is strong, and approximates more to blue in the Alaskan than in the other varieties, which are frequently of an almost pale grey. When made up the fur is usually utilized for neck pieces and trimmings, and, owing to its unusual colour, the furrier must employ artistic discrimination in order to display it to the best advantage.

Cross Fox. This is a handsome, rather flamboyant skin, is a variety of the American red fox (see "Fur-farming"), and is larger—sometimes much larger—than the European red fox. The cross fox is generally of a yellow or orange tone, with a pronounced dark, almost black, marking on the shoulders and under parts.

There are usually silver-pointed hairs in amongst the other colouring and, in general, the animal is rather striking. The best skins come from Labrador, and lower qualities from the northern parts of the U.S.A.

As with the majority of fur-bearing animals, the colder the climate the better the fur; consequently, the cross foxes coming from the upper Missouri districts suffer by comparison with those that are obtained in the bitter climate of Labrador, or in Siberia.

Grey Fox. There are many grey or greyish foxes, but the one to which the name is usually applied comes from Virginia, and is known as the Virginia fox. It also

inhabits many other southern and, consequently, warmer States, such as North Carolina and Tennessee, Louisiana and Florida, and is found as far north as Ohio.

It is, as its name implies, grey in colour, and is



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AMERICAN MOIRÉ LAMB—FOX COLLAR

variously marked according to its habitat, the more southern varieties approximating more to a silver grey, whilst the northern groups have more colouring—black, red, and yellow.

The Virginia fox has longish rather rough hairs of two colours, black and white, and the under fur is grey ;

there is colouring, red or yellow, on the flanks, though not very pronounced, and the underneath part of the animal is red and white. Altogether it is a handsome skin, about 2 ft. 6 in. long.

Of other grey foxes may be mentioned the **Kitt**, a much smaller animal, not exceeding 2 ft. in length, having long rough white hairs over the grey fur. It is not a very common skin, though its quality is not superfine, and is found in the northern parts of the U.S.A. The **Turkish Fox** is almost identical in size and appearance, and sells much more largely to-day than its American brother.

The **Patagonian Fox**, which is largely imported nowadays, comes from the Southern American continent. The fur is coarse and, as a rule, the colouring cannot be described as handsome. When dyed, however, it makes up into fairly good-looking and modestly-priced stoles and muffs. It resembles a jackal rather than a fox.

Red Fox. This animal inhabits both the Old and New Worlds, and the American variety is one of the most popular furs known to the trade. Tales of the cunning of the fox are legion, and it is reasonable to surmise that the acute development of the fox's wits is due to his endless state of warfare with man. Consider the ordinary English fox. When routed out of his covert, he is pursued by about forty hounds and possibly two hundred riders, and yet a perusal of the reports of the various packs shows that Reynard gets away scot-free far more often than not.

In colour he is a reddish-brown, feeds chiefly on rabbits, and is the deadly enemy of the poultry-farmer. The skin of the English fox, owing to his being preserved for hunting, never comes into the fur market, as the fox, when caught, is devoured by the hounds. His Continental brother, who flourishes where hunts are

not, is, however, in a different case, and European red fox skins are sold freely in the Continental marts.

The writer remembers with what a shudder he witnessed the shooting of a fox in the Ardennes during the Armistice in 1918, although the native who did the deed was quite proud of it, and naturally would not understand the British way of looking at it. A photograph appeared in an illustrated paper in 1922 of a fox who had been chased into a village, where he was lost. The photograph showed the fox on a cottage roof, near a chimney, and positively laughing at the hounds and huntsmen, who were searching for him in the street.

The European red fox, with the exception of the variety found in Norway, which is brighter in colour and finer in fur, is somewhat rough in the hair and, more often than not, is dyed black before it comes into the furrier's hands.

The American red fox is larger and more brilliant in colour than the European variety. It inhabits most of the Northern States of the U.S.A. and practically the whole of Canada up to and including Alaska. It may here be mentioned that, with the exception of the white fox, animals who live near the sea have thicker, stronger hair than those living inland. The Alaska foxes, blue and red, are a case in point.

The colouring and quality of the fur vary very much, as is not to be wondered at when we consider that the red fox ranges over the larger part of an immense continent, with its accompanying variations in climate.

The skins are mounted and used either in their natural colouring or dyed black, the latter treatment being more usual; they are also dyed brown, and various fancy shades.

snow white in the winter only, and not always then, as by no means does every white fox become pure white with the advent of winter, many of them being a whitish grey. In the best specimens, both the top hair and



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WHITE FOX

under fur are white, and these skins are the most expensive ; in other cases, the top hair will be white and the under fur blue or grey.

Many skins are yellowish in appearance and are chiefly used for dyeing, as the white fox, to use a furrier's term, "takes the dye" extremely well. Those

handsome skins known as "celestial foxes" are white foxes dyed; colours from *eau-de-nil* to black are freely used.

The white fox is gregarious and of a rather migratory disposition, wandering in packs along the seashore, where it feeds on practically anything it can pick up, e.g. seal cubs, ermines, birds and birds' eggs, and the small rat known as the lemming. White foxes increase in numbers up to every fourth or fifth year, and then they appear to die off in heaps. Whether this is due to shortage of food or disease is not established; but it may fairly be assumed that, as the lemming migrates in droves, any shortage of these animals deprives the white fox of one of his chief sources of food supply; and, as food in the Far North is extremely hard to come by, the foxes probably perish of starvation, the fittest only surviving.

The skin of the white fox has much to recommend it, being of singular beauty. It is quite devoid of smell, a drawback from which many animals, other varieties of foxes included, suffer to a greater or less extent. Every one has heard of the "scent" of the English fox, by which the hounds follow his track, and a certain "tang" is to be noticed in many other vulpine breeds.

Goat. The goat is indigenous in most parts of the world and thrives on the most extraordinary diet. The writer once attempted to keep goats in a garden, but the animals, in addition to devouring their ordinary food of oats, chaff, and cabbage, demolished everything that grew—flowers, shrubs and plants, the bark from the fruit trees (which consequently died), girls' dresses, the handle of the roller, reams of newspapers, match-boxes, tobacco, a few yards of rope. In fact, they were omnivorous.

Of course, no garden existed after the goats had been in residence a week or so.

The common goat is not sought after by the furrier but rather by the leather dresser ; its flesh is good eating and is used for food in many countries, and its milk is of a particularly nutritive value for weak and anaemic children.

The Chinese goat—black, white, grey, and mixed colours—is, on the other hand, in great demand at the fur sales, and is sold in extremely large quantities, over 60,000 skins being put up for auction at the London Spring Sales this year (1931), in addition to 14,000 rugs (each rug being usually made of two skins). The hair is long and coarse and wears very well ; hence the great use made of these skins for hearthrugs, which are both handsome and inexpensive. In the Victorian days, coachmen wore capes or tippets made of black goat, but the modern chauffeur would have a fit if invited to don such a garment nowadays. Our troops in the late war wore jerkins made of this fur. The hair of the “ kids ” is much softer and more silky than that of the fully-grown animals. The skins are made up by the Chinese into a cross shape usually containing about four skins, and are sold as crosses. Of late years, however, this practice appears to be falling into disuse, and the skins are exported singly without being sewn together.

Prior to the War, Mongolian goat, known to the fur world as Mouflon, had sporadic outbursts of activity in the trade. This skin had all the top hair removed, and the fur, which much resembled wool, was dyed all the colours of the rainbow. It has never achieved much popularity in the United Kingdom, but is not eschewed elsewhere.

Thibet Goat. This is a long, silky-haired skin, once widely popular, but now mainly in use on the Continent. The white is used in the United Kingdom for rugs,

especially for children, and both black and white make an effective trimming ; the hair is quite curly and, in some cases, is practically in ringlets.

Angora Goat. Owing to the disturbed state of Asia Minor, the trade in these skins is now limited. When in vogue they were used as rugs and trimmings, but their chief use is to produce mohair. An inferior descendant of the Angora goat acclimatized at Cape Colony, and known as Cape goat, is mainly used for leather, as his fur, or rather fleece, has greatly deteriorated since his introduction to South Africa.

A good deal of uncertainty exists in the trade as to the origin of many of the skins coming from the inscrutable East. White Thibet, which was formerly described as a goat, is now considered to be a lamb.

Whether the fur described as Chinese " kid " (usually sold in " crosses ") is a goat or a lamb is doubtful, whilst the slink is sometimes called Mongolian when the animal is somewhat older.

Guanaco, together with a closely allied animal termed Vicuna, is an inhabitant of South America. Its colour is light brown or reddish and white, and the skins make handsome motor rugs ; being light in weight, they are also utilized for perambulator rugs. At the moment the skins are quite inexpensive, and may be described as a fleece rather than fur. The wool is utilized for garments where softness and light weight are indispensable.

Hamster. The hamster rat is a native of Germany and Russia, and, although not so destructive as the Norwegian or brown rat, so well known to and hated by everyone, causes sufficient damage to crops to warrant its being thinned out with the utmost ruthlessness. It is brown in colour, the under fur being of a blue shade, and the skins were formerly used as

inexpensive linings to coats. The War stopped all trade in hamster, but it has revived in due course, and will

probably increase, as the animals *must* be kept under. It is usually imported in the form of what are termed "sacs," i.e. long shapeless linings made of many skins stitched together.

The Rev. J. G. Wood states that the hamster is a short-tempered animal, and will attack man with little or no provocation.

Hare. The timid hare has, when disguised by the furrier's art, been the means of many fraudulent transactions, in which he has masqueraded as fox (all kinds, especially the expensive ones), sable, and even seal. There are several varieties, but those inhabiting the Polar regions are of most interest to furriers. The white hare is another example of a white winter-coated animal, being grey in summer and turning white only in winter. Its uses are varied: the flesh is utilized for food, and the skins are



NATURAL JACKAL

treated in all sorts of ways once they come into the furrier's hands. They are in favour as furs for infants,

the white being of the purest variety ; and, as a cheap fur having the appearance of far more expensive skins, white hare is unrivalled.

For the stage, where appearance is more sought for than intrinsic value, it is popular. Undyed it has the appearance of white fox ; and, dyed, it may resemble black, blue, celestial, or red fox, and lynx. It makes a cheap and withal effective trimming, and has even been so treated as to resemble ermine.

The American hare, which is a small animal not more than a foot in length, is known in the trade as the American rabbit. Formerly very numerous, it now appears but rarely at the sales ; in colour it is brown, changing to white in winter, and the under fur is blue.

Kolinski. The kolinski may be described as the cheapest of the sables. A native of Siberia, China, and Japan, its fur, of a brownish yellow shade, is short and close, and somewhat resembles mink.

In its natural state it is not exactly handsome, but it is frequently, or rather usually, dyed sable or marten colour, or is "topped."

As a rule it is used in the manufacture of trimmings ; and the "sable" brushes, which are in such request by artists, are generally made of kolinski tails ; it is also used for wraps and scarves.

Lamb. When a furrier speaks of "lamb," he does not mean the English variety that one sees skipping about the fields in March, but Asiatic animals described variously as Astrakhan, Persian lamb, caracul, and "slink."

Great confusion exists in the fur trade in the nomenclature of these animals. The majority of "Persian" lambs come from Bokhara and Afghanistan ; they are the young of the broadtail sheep (*Ovis Platurea*) and are termed either Astrakhan or Persian lamb by the English,

Persianer by the Germans, Astrakhan by the French, and Caracul by the Russians. They got the name of Astrakhan from the port on the Caspian through which the skins were originally imported into Europe.

The sheep are usually greyish yellow, but the lambs when born are black in colour, a few brown or speckled, and their fur has a beautiful tight curl, which, however, it soon loses. This curl is usually at its best from three to ten days after birth, after which period, unless specially treated by the natives, it becomes woolly and useless to the furrier. Although naturally black, practically every skin is dyed black, usually in Germany, sometimes across the Atlantic, or in Russia.

The fur is extremely popular, being both handsome and hard-wearing, and is used for every purpose to which fur is put. The busbies of the officers of the King's Royal Rifles and Rifle Brigade are made of this fur. It varies in popularity, following Fashion's fickle fancy; but, as expensive furs are always fashionable, no one will go far wrong in purchasing Astrakhan.

The Bokharan sheep run very wild and the icy hillsides cause many falls to pregnant ewes, resulting in premature births; these skins, if the hair is extremely short, are termed **Galyaks**, and if more developed, resembling Persian lamb, are called **Broadtails**. The leather of galyak is extremely delicate and the fur surface is flat, resembling moiré silk.

An extraordinary fallacy is in existence to the effect that to obtain broadtails the mother sheep has to be first killed. This is one of those stories that (owing to their long start) are never tracked down and demonstrated to be the untruths they really are. The idea is preposterous, as, looking at it from the coldly commercial view, a ewe is worth, alive, considerably more than two lambs, alive or dead; and the inhabitants

of Central Asia are not such fools as to destroy their own actual wealth, represented by the mother, for the problematic return from two unborn lambs. No ; the broadtail is either a very young or a stillborn lamb, and there is no foundation in the absurd fallacy that recurs with unfailing regularity that the mother ewe has to be slain to obtain the broadtails.

Broadtail is usually black and has a flat surface like moiré silk ; the leather is delicate, but the skin finds favour on account of its light weight when made into garments.

The best lambskins, silky, with tight curl and fine gloss, undoubtedly come from Bokhara, whilst others of inferior quality are obtained in Afghanistan, N.W. India, Persia, Asia Minor, Bessarabia, and Rumania.

Most of the Afghan skins are nowadays sent to Bokhara, although previously Peshawar was their entrepôt. In 1903 the animal was imported into S.W. Africa and crossed with the native sheep ; these skins can be recognized by having a glazed black leather. The U.S.A. imported this sheep in 1909 and various crossings, both there and in Canada, with the native sheep, have added to the number of varieties of Astrakhan that confuse both furrier and client.

Other lambs are dyed grey, and make up into pretty but somewhat fragile specimens of the furrier's art.

Grey Astrakhan is a natural grey variety of Persian lamb, and has the hair tightly curled in numerous tiny ringlets ; it resembles Krimmer or Crimean lamb, which is also natural grey, but the colour and quality of the latter are superior.

There is also the **Shiraz**, or Half-Persian lamb, the fur of which is more of a woolly nature than that of the true Persian. It is raised in South-west Persia.

Caracul lambs are the young of the broad buttocked

sheep (*Ovis Steatopyga*) which inhabit the Kirghiz Steppes and South Russia. This fur is known as Caracul by the English and French, Triebel Moiré by the Germans, and Astrakhan by the Russians. These lambs are smaller than Persian and the fur is not tightly curled, but has a kind of flat pattern; in colour they are naturally brown, and many are pure white. The best Caracul skins have a beautiful appearance and are nowadays dyed in a variety of colours. The sheep are farmed in the U.S.A. but so far have not become naturalized.

A method of distinguishing between skins of "Persian" lamb and Caracul is to examine the tail, which in the former is fairly large, shaped like an isosceles triangle, and in its natural state has a white tip, whilst the tail of the Caracul is quite small and insignificant.

Very young lambs other than those mentioned are known as slinks; *et nomen illorum legis est.*

Lamb (Thibet). White lambskins of this nomenclature are imported in a dressed condition from China, frequently made up into "crosses" or "robes." The fur is silky and fine, and the skins are largely used for dyeing.

Leopard. This animal and the Panther are considered to be the same species, and are found distributed freely over Asia and Africa. The Jaguar is the American variety of the leopard, but is larger and more powerful, and the markings on the skin are larger and have a black spot in the centre. These animals are great tree climbers and have practically all the attributes of the domestic cat, greatly magnified. The black panther, reputed to be the most savage animal on earth, is exactly like a gigantic black cat. There are two or three fine specimens in the London Zoo. Both leopard and jaguar are handsomely coated, the fur being of a yellowish brown; that of the African leopard is lighter than the Asiatic, and all are spotted or ringed.

In some cases the rings are solid; in others they are more like blotches. The skins make handsome rugs; the bass drummer in many British regiments wears a leopard skin as an apron; whilst saddle housings on officers' chargers in several cavalry regiments are of the same handsome fur.

The royal "kaross" of the kings of the Zulus—Chaka, Dingaan, Panda, and Cetewayo—was of leopard skin, the leopard holding with regard to royalty the position that ermine occupied in England. The Somali leopard, marked with small spots on an almost white ground, makes most strikingly effective ladies' coats.

There is one other rather important member of the tribe, known as the **Snow Leopard** or Ounce, an inhabitant of the highlands of Central Asia. It differs in colour from the other leopards by being almost white, and the spots are not so defined, except on the head, where they are black and solid; the fur is long, about 2 in. These characteristics are due to the cold climates in which the snow leopard lives.

Lynx. So-called from the Greek $\lambda\upsilon\gamma\chi$ = see; was credited by the ancients with being able—in modern parlance—to "see through a brick wall." It is found all through British North America, Siberia, and sparingly in Europe. The American variety is about 4 ft. long and weighs about 40 lb., but is a shy, almost timid, animal living chiefly on the small American hare; it also devours other fur-bearing animals, such as martens, so the fur traders view an influx of lynxes with somewhat mixed feelings. It can travel easily over snow, as it possesses large feet (covered with stiff hairs) that act as snowshoes, but on level ground it is slow and is run down on foot by Indians.

The fur is soft and silky, is of a reddish brown with numerous grey hairs, and is considerably longer on the

flanks than on the back of the animal ; in fact, the back is mostly covered with hair only, whilst the belly fur is 3 in. long, spotted white in colour. The lynx has tufted ears and looks as though it grew a beard. The fur is frequently dyed black, and is beautifully soft and flowing ; in this respect it has a better appearance than dyed fox, but it is much more fragile. When dyed seal-brown, it is used in the manufacture of the busbies of the officers in our Hussar regiments.

Marmot. This animal inhabits Russia, parts of Europe, Canada, and Central Asia ; the American prairie dog is also of the marmot tribe.

All the marmots are burrowing animals, and make double entrances to their nests, which are built in some cases as deep down as 10 ft.

The colour of the under fur is a dirty yellow, with top hairs of a darker shade, and many skins are dark all over ; the skins are inexpensive and, not being particularly handsome, are usually dyed. The Russian marmot grows to as much as 18 in. in length, but the other varieties are smaller. The flesh is used for food, particularly at the beginning of winter, when the animal is plump in readiness for his winter sleep. The French call the animal *murmelle* ; *marmotte* is the name applied to the raccoon.

The Alpine marmot, which is akin to the Russian, is found in the Pyrenees and Carpathians, as well as the Alps. Formerly it was tamed and brought to England by Savoyards, who played the soulful instrument called a " hurdy-gurdy." Marmots, however, were ousted by monkeys, much more lively and amusing animals ; but now

The organ grinder far has fled,
His monkey comrades all are dead ;
The magistrates of modern time
Have called his harmless art a crime.

A few years ago marmot was expensive and in vogue, but the same cannot be said to-day; the wheel of fashion has turned and the fur has become much cheaper and is now chiefly used for trimmings. In prehistoric times the animal inhabited Great Britain.

A cousin of the marmots, though a much smaller animal, called the **Suslik**, was formerly sold in London in large quantities for cheap linings—its trade term was *Kalouga*.

The *suslik* is a hibernating animal, and is found in Rumania, the lower Volga district of Russia, and Central and Southern Siberia. An American variety, known as the **Gopher**, is not a furrier's proposition. The popular fur known as **Peschanik** comes from an inhabitant of the Russian steppe and is a sub-species of the *suslik*.

Marten. There are four martens in common use in the fur trade, viz., the *baum*, stone, Japanese, and American or Canadian sable. The *baum*, or pine marten, was formerly numerous in Great Britain, but nowadays is rarely met with. It is about 2 ft. long, and has long soft brown fur and a yellowish throat, which serves to differentiate it from the stone marten, which has a white throat. The tail, about 6 in. long, is full and valuable. In addition to the United Kingdom it inhabits Scandinavia, Germany, Russia, and Italy. The name "pine" marten denotes its favourite habitation. When it is dyed, it is difficult for a person other than a fur expert to distinguish it from sable.

The "stone" or beech marten inhabits rocky ground; hence its name. The fur is coarser than that of the *baum* marten, but is handsome and suitable for the wear of fair-haired persons. There is a shade of what may be termed purple in the fur, and the under fur, which is fairly conspicuous, is white. The animal inhabits Scotland and Ireland, and is to be found in

almost all the European countries; a variety is also indigenous to Central Asia.



By courtesy of Peter Robinson, Ltd.

PERSIAN BROADTAIL, TRIMMED
WITH NATURAL CANADIAN MINK

The Japanese marten, imported from Japan and China, is a somewhat smaller animal, about 18 in. long; the fur is yellow and, consequently, as this colour suits but few complexions, it is usually dyed sable colour before being made up, greatly to the advantage of its appearance. Being inexpensive, in comparison with sable, it has much to recommend it; but the supply is limited and somewhat erratic, as a good deal of the catch—in some years, all—is retained in the Far East.

Martens are very popular with furriers owing to their resemblance to sable, and the American marten can

sometimes be distinguished from the real or Russian sable only with great difficulty.

The American marten or Canadian sable inhabits North America, and is one of the chief prizes of the trapper. A considerable proportion of the skins taken yearly are bought by U.S.A. traders, who bombard the hunters with picturesque price lists for "best" skins, with the result that the Canadian fur companies not infrequently find the trappers have sent their martens south for "best" prices, which, it may be mentioned, are but rarely obtained.

The marten has many enemies in addition to the human hunters. The fisher, lynx, and wolverine wage incessant war on it, and it is thought that some as yet unknown disease thins out its numbers every seven or eight years. It is arboreal and extremely active, being able to capture the grey squirrel, and, being an extremely greedy animal, is easily trapped. Its fur is silky, the best specimens being of a rich dark brown, with the under fur drab.

Inferior skins are lighter and yellower, but in all cases there is a dark marking down the middle of the back.

Generally speaking, the darker the fur the more valuable it becomes; hence the paler martens are frequently either dyed or "topped."

Many connoisseurs consider that from the purely beautiful point of view the American marten is superior to the Russian sable; but the latter still holds pride of place, although there is no doubt that a good Canadian is a superior skin to a medium Russian.

Mink. This is another savage animal of the weasel tribe. It inhabits Canada, U.S.A., Russia, China, and Japan. In Canada it is one of the chief fur-bearing animals, and the vast "muskeg," or marshy region—400 miles by 70 in extent—is its chief domicile. It is about



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CARACUL AND ERMINE

18 in. long, and spends as much time in the water as on land ; its fur in consequence is close and thick, and the "pelt," or leather, thick and comparatively heavy. Its colour varies from yellow to red, but, as a rule, a mink skin is a kind of oaken brown ; the hair is short and close, harsher than the sable, and the under fur is usually dark brown.

The tail is by no means so large or handsome as that of the marten, being somewhat thin and straight, although it is sometimes 8 in. or 9 in. in length ; but the fur is probably the hardest-wearing of the finer fur skins known. It may be described as everlasting, and will lose its colour long before it wears out. Hence, as its price is considerably lower than that of sable, it is a most economical fur to purchase. It is used in garments for both sexes, and is rather more popular in Canada and U.S.A. than in Europe.

Mole. It is a far cry from the days when the game-keeper wore a mole-skin

waistcoat to the present fashion for this small but effective skin. The animal is about 4 in. to 5 in. in length, and is quite common in Great Britain (the best skins coming from Scotland), France, Germany, and throughout Asia to Japan; a different species, known as the golden mole, is to be found in South Africa.

Although there are millions of moles in England, very few persons have seen one alive, owing, of course, to the fact that the animal lives underground, and with its voracious appetite cannot be kept for any length of time in captivity. It is a furious creature—eating, hunting, working, fighting, and making love with a concentrated ferocity that would make it, if a large animal, the most formidable in the world. In the breeding season the males fight to the death, the vanquished being forthwith eaten by the conqueror; and it is stated that two moles meeting in a runway will immediately engage in mortal combat if there is no side passage into which one may slip to allow the other to pass. Moles are not, as commonly



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MINK

thought, blind, but have eyes, which on occasion can be withdrawn from harm practically into the skull, when the mass of thick fur surrounding them acts as a further protection. The fur of the mole has the quality of not retaining a particle of mould. They are very thirsty animals ; and the writer, during the War, had to take measures against a lot of moles which connected up the trenches of which he was in charge with a running stream, to the extreme discomfort of the human underground denizens. The mole's sense of smell is very keen, as is its hearing. It subsists on amazing quantities of earthworms, grubs, and beetles. One naturalist, who kept a mole for a short time, used to turn a half-pint measure full of worms into the mole's box three times a day ; they were all eaten ; and the first time the full supply was not left, the mole died—apparently of starvation.

Moles are accused of destroying shrubs and roots, but this is due to the mole's habit of stopping at nothing when engaged in business ; and if a root or potato comes in the way of his tunnel it is promptly evacuated. To give an idea of the vast multitudes there are in England, it has been estimated that there is a mole for every inhabitant, so that if their numbers were not reduced they would become an absolute plague. Foxes, badgers, weasels, owls, and hawks all take a heavy toll ; but there seems to be no appreciable diminution in the quantity of moles living in the United Kingdom to-day ; one celebrated firm in the West of England has no fewer than 15,000 mole trappers on its books.

When made up, the fur is beautifully soft and light, and at the same time warm ; it cannot be described as hard-wearing, the leather being very thin, but, owing to its suppleness, it lends itself readily to the manufacture of graceful wraps and stoles and light coats.

The genius of the furrier has evolved many artistic ways of working the skins, and a mole garment produced by a first-class firm is a most elegant and pleasing example of the furrier's art. The colour of the skin is grey, with blue as the under shade, though some skins are practically steel grey. Occasional cream skins are met with, but it is uncertain whether they are albinisms or not.

Moleskins are nowadays dyed all the colours of the rainbow, thus enabling the furrier to get very unusual and withal artistic effects in the working up of the various garments.

Monkey. The monkey, as known to furriers, is not the impudent brown rascal of the Indian bazaars and jungles, but the much more handsome Colobus monkey, which inhabits Abyssinia and parts of East Africa. The fur of this animal is most beautiful. In the Abyssinian variety it consists of long silky hairs, which are black on the back and white on the flanks of the animal ; whilst the East African is black, except for a white fringe on the shoulders. The white hair of this monkey is used by the Masai as part of their war dress, and formerly was worn in the shape of rings below the knees and above the elbows by the Zulus ; also the spears and shields of certain *impis* were ornamented with tufts of the same fur.

Long-haired monkey is occasionally extremely fashionable, but, let it be whispered, it is imitated to a wonderful extent by a much less romantic and, at the same time, decidedly cheaper fur.

Other monkeys of varying hues are imported from time to time from West Africa, but the animal known to naturalists as the mantled guereza is undoubtedly the king of them all from the point of view of the beauty of its fur.

Musquash. The name musquash camouflages the musk rat, which inhabits North America in millions. It has a counterpart in Europe in the shape of the water rat, or rather, water vole, though this animal is not a commercial article. The musquash, however, is one of the most important skins used in the fur trade, and the furrier, or rather the skin merchant, knows it under several sub-divisions, e.g. Canadian, Eastern, Western, South-western and Southern, silver and black, each of which differs substantially from the others.

Generally speaking, the southern skins, coming from the warmer climate of such States as Louisiana, are less heavily furred than those obtained in Manitoba. The musquash, however, is found in a belt extending from Alaska to Virginia, in addition to the Southern States, so that the heavier-furred skins are sold in as large quantities as the southern variety. Musk rats, mink, and beaver are close neighbours, but not at all friendly ones; the mink in particular is the deadly foe of the musk rat, who, in his turn, is, despite his size, an object of dread to the beaver.

A musquash skin varies from 6 in. to 12 in. in length; the fur is a chestnut brown, the belly part being white and the under fur bluish or bluish white. It is made up either in the natural state or else unhaired and dyed to resemble seal, of which it becomes a remarkable imitation. It is warm and durable, and, though rather more expensive than of yore, it is still in great demand for coats and linings. In the natural state it looks a little heavy, but when made to resemble seal it yields to no fur as regards wear, appearance and general utility.

The musquash is a great pest owing to its boring habits resulting in numerous floods. In the Southern States, particularly where the rivers are confined by

artificial banks known as levees the muskrat causes immense damage. In the wild state, the animal makes an artificial dam of mud, twigs, etc., and then proceeds to bore holes through it, opening under the water; it is unable to resist the temptation of a ready-made, man-built dam, and consequently attacks it, with disastrous results.

This animal is invariably termed "muskrat" in the U.S.A., "musquash" being a European term.

Black musquash has the top hairs very much darker than the ordinary brown variety, and is rather more expensive.

Silver musquash is a small skin, of an iridescent silvery appearance. Not many of these skins are seen on the market, but they make up in a most effective



NATURAL MUSQUASH



By courtesy of Harrod's, Ltd.

MOLE AND FOX

manner ; the habitat of this variety is Alaska and North-West Canada and Russia.

Nutria. This is the furrier's name for the skin of the Coypu rat, a large rodent, 2 ft. long, inhabiting the Argentine and parts of Brazil ; it has rough hair, about 3 in. long, but before being made up, the skins are always unhaired and the fur that is described as nutria is the under fur only of the animal. This under fur is brown, sometimes rather "woolly." The better skins make an excellent imitation of beaver—their shortness of hair, however, gives them away. It is also dyed, when it makes still another imitation of seal. As this animal has its teats on the back, the skin is cut there and the fur used is from the under part of the creature.

Opossum. Two distinct kinds of opossum are in general use by furriers, the American and the Australian. The first-named is not found in that home of fur-bearing animals—Canada—at all, but in the U.S.A., mainly in the Eastern States. In colour it is grey, the top hairs being light grey, and the fur has a

“kink” in it that is distinctive ; the under fur is a dirty white.

Opossum, though rather a coarse fur, wears well and lends itself to dyeing, one of the most effective of these processes causing the fur to resemble skunk.

The animals are extremely destructive, having the habits of the rat and being about the size of a cat ; they are consequently looked on, and rightly, as a perfect pest. The phrase “playing possum” originates from the well-known habit of the animal, when in a tight corner, of pretending to be dead. The American opossum is one of the rare marsupials, or pouched mammals, found outside Australia.

Australian opossum is a somewhat smoother fur, and the colour varies, according to the part of the continent from which the animal comes, from blue-grey to red ; the colouring generally is more brilliant than in the American fur, and



NATURAL BROWN OPOSSUM



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FINE QUALITY RUSSIAN
PONY SKIN, TRIMMED WITH
RUSSIAN ERMINE

the hair is softer and more silky. An Australian opossum, smaller, rustier in colour, and inferior in fur, is known as *Ringtail*, whilst the *Tasmanian* variety is well, though coarsely furred, approximates to brown in colour, and is nearly as large again as the Australian.

Otter. The otter is found in practically every country in the world, though the size and quality of the fur vary greatly. It exists in large numbers in Great Britain and Ireland, and there are several packs of otter hounds in England. It is an aquatic animal, spending a large portion of its time in the water, and is very destructive to fish, on which it largely feeds. An otter will frequently

catch fish after fish and merely eat a small part near the shoulders, abandoning the rest.

European otters are about 3 ft. 6 in. in length ; Canadian much larger, about 4 ft. The hair is a dark nut brown, extremely durable and handsome, thick and warm. When unhaired and dyed seal brown, otter is superior in appearance to seal, and rather more durable. It is ordinarily used as a trimming, also for hats. Scandinavian otters are larger than those inhabiting the rest of the Continent of Europe, whilst the British otters are the smallest of the species.

It is difficult to say why otter is not more popular. It is most beautiful in appearance, and for hard wear is unequalled. Occasionally golden otters come to the sales from Norway : these are beautiful skins of a golden shade, and are extremely expensive.

The sea otter, which exists mainly in the Northern Pacific, possesses a fur which may be termed the most durable of all the fine furs. The skin, unlike that of the other aquatic animals, does not require unhairing. The fur is a rich, thick, woolly growth, the top hair being extremely soft and much shorter than is usual in other fur-bearing animals. The creature is about 5 ft. long and is very rare ; the fur is used to trim men's overcoats and, in China, for the adornment of mandarins' robes. A certain number of silver hairs are frequently to be seen in this fur, adding to its beauty by the contrast with the dark brown. A skin seen by the writer a few years since was priced at £800 !

Under the Tzarist *régime*, most sea otter skins were taken for Russia, where they were used as trimming for the overcoats of the aristocracy ; nowadays the few skins that come to market usually go to the U.S.A. or Canada. Reckless hunting has caused its partial, almost entire, extinction.

Rabbit. What the fur trade of to-day would do without rabbit, it is impossible to say! Thirty years ago no furrier with any pretensions to fame would even look at it ; but time works wonderful changes, and the once despised rabbit is now one of the great stand-bys of the trade. He is practically never sold under his own name, but under his much older cognomen of "coney," which dates back to the time of the translation of the Bible (1536) at least. Many a woman who purchased a coney coat would have been highly annoyed to hear it described as "rabbit," but "What's in a name?"

The chief use of the rabbit is to represent something he is not : the Continental dyers are so ingenious that they can imitate with rabbits almost any fur you care to mention. They dye them a variety of colours ; have them pulled, sheared, unhaired, treated electrically ; and, in short, serve up the coney in a state so entirely different from that of nature, that it is small wonder that people have been deceived as to the real nature of the furs they admire so much.

Of the rabbits that come from Australia, a large proportion are too poorly furred to be of any use except for felt. Better furred skins come from China, where they are freely used for linings ; over 815,000 white Chinese rabbits were put up at the Spring Sales in 1931.

Enormous quantities, many millions, are imported from Australia every year, and a somewhat smaller number from the Continent. The rabbit is extremely prolific, and if left to itself soon develops into a plague—the example of Australia is ever before us. White rabbit skins are used for children's furs, especially in France ; the hoods of B.A.'s are usually lined with the same fur. Two hundred million is the estimated annual production of rabbit skins.

Tame rabbits are much larger than the wild ones (which grow to the length of about 1 ft.), and are bred nowadays with the idea of improving the fur of the animal, as well as its flesh.

There are rabbit breeders' associations in England to-day, and royalty has been known to wear a beautiful garment of English chinchilla rabbit.

Prior to the War, thousands of rabbits were bred in France and Belgium by the peasants. The German invasion did away with most of them, although the hutches, mostly little cells in the walls, were left.

A shell dropped on the writer's billet one day, in the town of Noeux, but the miner and his wife, who, despite the bombardment, had not evacuated their domicile, appeared much more grieved at the death of a pedigree doe rabbit they had than at the destruction of their home.



By courtesy of *Bradleys (Chepstow Place), Ltd.*

SABLE

Raccoon. This animal, from which is derived the coon so often mentioned in negro songs and folklore, is spread over most of the United States. As is invariable with fur-bearing animals, "the colder the climate the better the fur"; and consequently the skins obtained from the Southern States are very inferior in comparison with those from the States bordering Canada.

The raccoon is a small member (2 ft. to 3 ft. in length) of the bear family; in fact, the Germans call it the *wasch bär* (wash bear) from its unique habit of washing its food, when water is available, before eating it. The animal is about the size of the English badger, has long brownish-grey fur, with longer black and white hairs, and has a short bushy tail, with about eight black and white rings; the under fur is thick and almost black.

The best skins have a bluish shade, and are made up without being dyed; inferior coloured ones are dyed black or brown. Raccoon is a good hard-wearing fur and fairly moderate in price.

A certain number of skins are obtained in British Columbia, and these are usually larger.

An Asiatic variety, much longer and rougher in the hair, and with the fur tending to the consistency of wool, is known in the trade as Jap Fox (a misnomer) or Chinese raccoon.

The animal is found in the East and North-eastern portions of the Chinese Republic; the best specimens come from Northern Manchuria and are known as Amur raccoon. The Japanese variety is superior in quality.

Sable. It was once the ambition of every woman to possess a set of sables; that was in the days when the Russian sable was sold in respectable quantities, but the supply to-day is all too small.

In 1913, owing to indiscriminate trapping, the then Russian Government imposed a close time for this animal,

which was not to be hunted, trapped, kept in captivity, moved, or exported until October, 1916.

Thereafter came the Bolsheviks, and from 1913 to the present day the supply of Russian sables has been either not forthcoming or extremely erratic both as to quantity and quality.

As already stated, the sable is a blood brother to the American marten, and differs from that animal only in the colouring of the fur, the American or Canadian sable being of a warmer tone, more brown in fact than the Russian, which is of a blue-grey tendency. The Russian is also more delicate, but as a thing of beauty the sable is unsurpassed. It is suited to all complexions and figures, is of a soft silky nature, and in the more valuable skins is slightly silvered, i.e. has silver hairs among the brown. The best-wearing skins come from Kamschatka, the most beautiful from Yakutsk, and a decidedly inferior quality, shorter in the hair and paler in colour, from China.

Japanese sables somewhat resemble Canadian, but are extremely yellow : they are consequently usually dyed or topped before being worked up.

Seal. Volumes have been written about the seal. Once the mainstay of the trade, now in Britain a seal coat is as rare as roses in December. Broadly speaking, seals are either hair seals or fur seals, the first named being the species that is occasionally seen on the British coast, that supplies the needs of the Eskimo, and also furnishes the specimens that are seen in zoological collections and on the stage. As may be gathered from its name, it has hair—close, hard, and bristly—but no fur. The leather is thick, and the skin consequently unsuited for feminine adornment, at least amongst civilized communities. The colour varies from a light yellow to grey, and most skins have distinctive marks

of a circular shape and black in colour all over the body. They are of but little use from a furrier's point of view



By courtesy of Bradleys (Chepstow Place), Ltd.

SEAL MUSQUASH

(although men's motor coats and hats are occasionally made from this material), but are chiefly utilized as leather. The young are called *white coats*, being about the colour of a polar bear. Another variety of hair seal is known as *blue back*, for the obvious reason that its hair is of a cerulean tint. Hair seal is used for foot-muffs; and the busbies of the Hussars' troopers and of the rank and file of the Fusilier regiments are made of this material. The hair seal is found in almost every ocean.

The fur seal, really a sea lion, which formerly came to the sales by the hundred thousand, is now, owing to

regulations framed to prevent its extinction, sold very

sparingly. The seal fishery was carried on in a most reckless manner, seals of both sexes and all ages being killed in the open sea when *en route* to what may be called their breeding grounds.

A short description of these breeding grounds and what occurs there follows, but the fullest details are given in Elliott's *Seal Islands of Alaska*.

Briefly, the Alaska fur seal, which, like other species, is intensely gregarious, uses the Pribyloff Islands in Behring Sea as a home for some seven or eight months. The islands are empty of seals in April; in May, a few males, called "bulls," arrive; about the 1st of June, thousands of bulls emerge from the sea, select suitable spots on the land, and maintain their position against all comers until the arrival of the females or "cows." Incessant fighting marks this period, as the best positions are nearest the sea, and each fresh lot of bulls attacks with vigour those in possession, the result being that many of the earlier arrivals become exhausted and get driven further up the "rookery," as the breeding ground is termed.

The females arrive about the second week in June, in pup, and are immediately captured by the bulls; the strongest bull gets most wives and the fainthearts do not get a wife at all.

It is these fainthearts or "bachelor seals" that are killed, a blow on the nose from a seal club usually sufficing. The bachelor seals, who perforce are all together, are inspected, and certain numbers of them driven away from the rest of the herd to a spot some distance off, where they are killed and skinned.

The bulls, some of whom will have collected fifteen wives, take absolute control over the females, bringing them all together, and each bull mounting the strictest guard over his harem. Pups are born

about the second day after the arrival of the females and begin to swim at about a month.

Love and war are in great evidence from the 5th to 20th July, and savage are the battles waged between the lords of the harems and the "bachelors" about this period. (No bull takes any food or water from May until about 10th August.)

The fur is in its best condition in June and July, and the seals are not killed after the beginning of August, as the animal is changing its coat, and the fur is what is known by furriers as "stagey."

The animals abandon the islands in December.

Other herds of fur seals are the Copper Islands, Lobos (near Monte Video), Cape Horn, and Cape of Good Hope ; others are taken in Australasian and Japanese waters ; whilst those taken in the open Behring Sea are known as North-Wests.

A raw fur seal skin is an unlovely thing ; packed in salt, long-haired, brown, dirty, and greasy—a nauseating thing forsooth ; but how different when the furrier has exercised his art on it. The rough hairs gone, the leather supple, the brown fur beautifully soft, and dyed the well-known "seal" colour, i.e. brownish black, and the soft sleek "finish"—all combine to make us understand how our grandmothers adored their "seal jackets."

Seal garments are rare nowadays, their price being prohibitive, and they have been replaced—for the comfortably off—by dyed musquash, and for thinner-pursed people by dyed coney.

The U.S. Government, by agreement with the British and Japanese Governments, has taken the Pribyloff herd in hand, and by careful selection has increased it to about 900,000 seals. One-third of the proceeds of the sale of the skins is taken by each

Government ; and Alaska seals, as they are termed, are the only ones allowed in the U.S.A.

Owing to this protection, it is a fair assumption that the cost of seal garments will come down, as larger supplies will become available in the near future. The U.S. Government however (" was it so nominated in the bond ? ") stipulate that Alaska seals shall be dressed and dyed prior to being sold, thereby fostering the trade of the American dressers and dyers to the detriment of the British.

Skunk. As is generally known, the skunk protects himself by an overwhelming, devastating, indescribable odour ; but no person need fear to purchase a skunk " fur," as the animals are killed without being given a chance to bring their defensive weapon into play. Did they do so,



*By courtesy of
Harrod's, Ltd.*

SKUNK

no person could come near them, much less wear the skin. It speaks volumes for the skill of the hunters that they can avoid the discharge of this "scent," thus enabling furriers to make skunk the highly popular fur it is.

The animal inhabits the United States and the district south of Hudson Bay in Canada. It is about the size of a cat; is of a beautiful dark brown, almost black, colour; and usually, though not always, has white stripes of varying length on the head and back, frequently forming the letter Y from the head to the thighs. The fur is long, slightly harsh, and very hard-wearing. This fur, when made up undyed, is very subject to moth, and requires occasional beating in the summer months; but the "eggs" that people find in skunk are not eggs at all—merely a kind of scurf which appears in some skins, and, although absolutely harmless, causes alarm to the non-expert.

The South American skunk is smaller, silkier, and lighter in colour, in fact it rather resembles true skunk fur that has been exposed to the weather for a year or two. It is an inexpensive skin. Habitat: the Argentine.

Squirrel. The furrier's squirrel is not the English red nut-hoarder, but his American, Russian, or German grey brother. Half-a-dozen pairs of American grey squirrels were turned loose in Regent's Park, London, some fifteen years ago. They multiplied exceedingly and have spread over the country to such an extent that serious concern is being shown at their destructive habits and voracity; they kill the smaller and native red squirrel as formerly the Saxons killed the Britons. Squirrels vary in colour from red in Britain, through red-grey, grey, and dark grey, to almost black in Japan. The fur was formerly much used for linings, and has the peculiarity that it is but rarely used as a whole skin.

The back is grey, but the belly is white; and this latter, known as squirrel lock, is largely utilized for lining cloth coats; the backs, however, which are much more expensive, are made into the outside covering of various garments, rather than the linings. Squirrel is a beautifully light, soft, and delicate fur, and enjoys considerable popularity.

Tiger. It will possibly astonish the casual reader to learn that the best tigers come from Central Asia and from quite cold regions. The well-known Bengal tiger, the terror of the plains, is, although richly marked, very poorly furred; whilst the Manchurian is often 2 in. or 3 in. deep in the fur, and ten times as expensive.

As a rule, tigers are only in use as rugs, but the writer has seen in recent years a coat made of this



By courtesy of

Bradley's Ltd., W.

GREY SQUIRREL

somewhat bizarre fur. It was certainly a striking garment.

Wallaby. Half-a-dozen varieties of this small marsupial, all emanating from Australia, are in use in the fur trade. The fur is rather coarse, varying from 1 in. to 3 in. according to the kind, and in some cases consists of hair only. The colour is usually reddish brown; when dyed, it is used as trimming and for small furs, and in the natural state for linings, foot-muffs, and rugs.

Wolf, in common with the majority of furs, has to put up with "the slings and arrows of outrageous" Fashion. In some seasons it achieves a measure of popularity consistent with its beauty and hard-wearing qualities; at other times it is a drug in the market.

Endless stories of the ferocity of wolves and the toll taken by them of human life are on record.



NATURAL WOMBAT

Wolves are highly intelligent and appear able to pass on their knowledge; they defy both traps and poison, in Canada at least, and are considered to be, on the whole, increasing.

The best American skins are of a bluish grey shade, are from 5 ft. to 6 ft. in length, and are known as "timber" wolves; the European animal is smaller, about the size of a large dog; but the Russian variety is rather larger. Grey is the prevailing colour of the wolf wherever he is found; the under-fur is much darker and is thick and rather fleecy in appearance.

When dyed, wolf fur becomes handsome in appearance, and this, combined with its durability, makes for popularity; the hair in many instances is as long as that of the fox.



By courtesy of

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SNAKE SKIN, TRIMMED FOX

The wolf and the dog have much in common, and will inter-breed ; advantage has been taken of this fact to produce the celebrated Canadian " huskies." (See *Romance of the Fur Trade*.)

Wolverine, known also as the glutton or skunkbear, inhabits the northern latitudes of Europe, Asia, and America. It is a peculiarly marked animal, having a patch of dark brown fur known as the saddle in the middle of the back, surrounded by a band of a light yellow shade ; whilst the rest of the body is brown, but not so dark as the saddle.

These creatures, in addition to their habit, already mentioned, of following up traps and eating the baits and the captured animals, will move the traps themselves for long distances and bury them in the snow ; they hide all sorts of things that are perfectly useless to them.

Unless goods are " cached " with unusual precautions, a wolverine will always get them, and Indians adopt some such device as attaching sleigh bells to the " cache." These animals are difficult to catch, and extremely powerful and dangerous to approach ; their length is from 3 ft. to 4 ft., and altogether they are most unpleasant creatures to have in one's vicinity.

Plain Tales of the North, by Mallet, has some first-hand and interesting stories of the wolverine.

Occasionally, wraps are made of the fur ; and very handsome rugs are a favourite article of production.

The **Wombat** of the fur trade is really the **Kaola**, usually known as Australian bear, a marsupial, quite harmless, and of arboreal habits. Being extremely easy to capture or kill, it is strictly protected by game laws. The hair is coarse and the under-fur brownish grey. It is not much sought after in Great Britain, but is in greater request in North America, where the skins are utilized for the making of very warm coats.

Amongst other fur bearers may be mentioned—

Chinchilla Rat, resembles bastard chinchilla but looks dirtier and is of impoverished appearance. The leather is very thin and the fur quite as delicate as that of its aristocratic cousin. Habitat: Chili.

Chipmunk (American) and **Burunduk** (Asiatic). A small rodent, with peculiar longitudinal stripes on its skin, varying according to the habitat of the animal from three to seven. The skin is about the size of that of a large mole and the fur is short, rough, and brown in colour, whilst the stripes are brownish black. Habitat: U.S.A., Russia, and India.

Pahmi. An animal about the size of the badger, but without its pronounced head markings. The fur is not so thick as that of the badger and is generally of a dark putty colour. Its habitat is China, and, as with the majority of furs coming from that country, but very little first-hand knowledge is available on the animal.

Antelope, Calf, and Pony are, strictly speaking, not fur bearers, having hair only, but they are freely used in the fur trade.

Antelopes are small deer of various species, usually brown in colour. The skins have a sleek look and the dressing leaves something to be desired. Habitat: South and East Africa, Central and Northern India.

Calf, when plucked and dressed, is rather uninteresting, being extremely flat and with but little hair. Has been dyed to represent tiger and leopard. Natural colouring varied, and habitat the same.

Pony. A season or two back rose to a popularity which is still well maintained. Ponies are bred for fur purposes in Poland and Russia. The hair varies from a shaggy, woolly texture to an almost flat surface. Some of the latter type are patterned and make up into handsome coats. The better skins are used in their natural

colourings; the inferior qualities are usually dyed. The prices of ponies vary to an unusual extent.

[NOTE.—H. Poland, in his book *Fur-bearing Animals*, to which the author is indebted for some of his natural history facts, describes over 600 animals as “fur-bearing.”]

CHAPTER IV

FUR FARMING

FUR farming, although lately described in a magazine article as a "new industry," is one of the oldest of occupations. The Chinese, for countless centuries, have farmed dogs, sheep, and goats, utilizing the flesh for food and the skins for trade; and if we term the sheep a fur-bearing animal, it becomes the very oldest form of farming in the world.

Germany has farmed Corsican sheep in the Harz mountains and is to-day going in intensively for mink, silver fox, musquash, and beaver. Sables were raised by the pre-War Russian Government, and after a lapse of many years the industry has recently been revived.

The Soviet Fur Syndicate, having leased a group of islands near Vladivostock, is now farming black and blue fox, deer, and the Amur raccoon. It is interesting to note, *en passant*, that the farm on the Komandorsky islands is one of the most ancient in the world.

It is quite obvious that fur farming has come to stay. The U.S.A., including Alaska, had, in 1930, \$50,000,000 invested in the industry, raising, amongst other animals, silver fox, blue fox, caracul, mink, marten, raccoon, and musquash. The capital value of the Canadian farms is about \$31,000,000, the animals chiefly farmed consisting of fox (various kinds), mink, musquash, beaver, and raccoon.

Farmed animals account for 19 per cent, as against 12½ per cent in 1928-9, of the whole fur production of Canada, and the silver fox, valued at \$2,716,264, represents 90 per cent of this farming figure.

open spaces approximating as nearly as possible to natural conditions would be best, but this is a fallacy. The fox is an extraordinarily shy animal, and, provided that a den is supplied to which the female can retire, and where she will be entirely unobserved, foxes can be and are kept in wire enclosures about 40 ft. square ; but—and this is a vital point—they *must* be left quiet and not disturbed by visitors. Six pairs of foxes can be kept on half an acre of ground, but trees or shrubs must be provided to give them that seclusion without which they will not thrive. The enclosures should be made of wire netting, the mesh not to exceed 2 in., as, if larger than this, the pups will escape ; and to lose a silver fox-pup is an expensive matter. The fences should be 10 ft. high, with a further 2 ft. sunk into the ground to prevent burrowing under, and turned in at the top, i.e. towards the enclosure, for another 2 ft., to prevent climbing over. Many farmers wire their pens all over, roof, floor, and sides, but diversity of opinion exists as to the floor being wired. The whole farm should be surrounded by a wire guard fence ; 6 ft. should be left between the pens. Foxes climb very well, and if trees are provided in their captivity they will ascend them and sleep in the branches ; this curious habit has not been observed in foxes in the wild state.

The farm should be kept as quiet and secluded as possible ; anything that tends to irritate the animals—for they never become absolutely tame—must be avoided, or no good results will be obtained. Strange faces have an extremely bad effect, and the animals should be visited only when absolutely necessary and then only by persons to whom they are accustomed.

Kennels, but constructed with a right-angled entrance so as to exclude light, should be provided. The animals frequently make dens for themselves ; but a kennel,

especially for a breeding female, should be put in every run. No litter is necessary.

As to food, the fox resembles the dog in being omnivorous, so a meat diet is as bad for the health of one as for the other. A quarter-pound of meat, bones to gnaw, and the vegetable scraps, etc., that one gives a dog, make an ideal diet for the fox.

They must be fed, *and not overfed*, with the utmost regularity, usually once, exceptionally twice a day. If allowed to gorge themselves, as in the wild state, the results are disastrous. The Canadian Department of Agriculture estimates that the daily diet of a 12 lb. fox should consist of (in summer) lean meat or offal $4\frac{3}{4}$ oz., dry cereals 2 oz., milk $\frac{1}{3}$ pt.; and, in winter, fat meat or offal $6\frac{1}{2}$ oz., fox biscuits $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz., milk $\frac{1}{3}$ pt. Food should be given raw, and it should be noted that livers are laxative. Fresh water, of course, is a necessity; it should be changed very frequently.

The mating season is in February and March, and the period of gestation about fifty-one days. The pups should be removed from the mother when they are weaned, i.e., when eight weeks old. After mating, the male should be removed from the female, as, although in the wild state the fox is monogamous, in confinement the presence of the male usually excites the female when she is in pup, with resultant bad effects on the young, in some cases abortion supervening.

(In confinement, a male has been successfully mated with four females.)

When the young are born, too much officiousness will cause the loss of the entire litter. The vixen resembles the doe rabbit in the slaughter of her offspring if looked at—she either kills them outright or carries them from place to place for days until they die of exhaustion; an instance is on record of a vixen killing her pups



By courtesy of

FOX CUBS IN EXERCISE ENCLOSURE

"Fur Farming"

because she objected to the sight of a stranger painting the farmer's house. This was some distance off, but in full view of the animal.

Careful farmers will permit no strangers near the farms between January and June, and for more reasons than one, a highly important factor being the fear of poachers, as the stock on a farm may be worth many thousands of pounds in an easily portable form.

Foxes are not difficult to keep in captivity; the difficulty is to get them to breed. Except during the mating season, they do not fight to any extent, and if kept clean and not overfed will remain in perfect health; *they must not, however, be irritated or frightened in any way*. The farmer must not expect to see his money back at once, as obviously he should not sell the first lot of pups, but keep them for breeding purposes; sufficient capital to carry on for a couple of years at least is therefore necessary.

As to climate and soil, "The colder the climate the better the fur"; whilst for the sake of cleanliness a sandy soil is to be preferred to any other.

As to situation, a farm should preferably be established not too far from a town, owing to the ease with which meat products and fish may be procured. As a side line for the regular farmer agriculturist, it should prove a lucrative undertaking. A recent estimate in *Fur Farming* lays down that a practical farmer could start with four pairs of breeding stock (first class) and his expenditure (inclusive) for the first year would be £562—on which he should get a return of £160 (about 28 per cent). A well-known and successful fox farmer, Mr. J. A. P. Stuart, reckons that a minimum profit of £60 per annum should be derived from each breeding pair; his own experience is that he saw all his money

back after his second season, besides having a much larger stock to breed from.

The would-be farmer is recommended to *learn on a farm*, and, when he has his own establishment, devote unremitting care to the animals, with immense emphasis on the word cleanliness. Incidentally, he should study the needs of the furrier, an important item that some farmers forget.

The best prices at the sales are nowadays obtained for "farmed" skins, which represented over 90 per cent of the 100,000 put up for auction at the London Sales in January and April, 1931.

En passant, it may be mentioned that as the lethal chamber is in use in practically every British fur farm (those for rabbits excepted), the alleged "cruelty" of the fur trade vanishes.

There are farms for foxes dotted all over Great Britain, skunk in Devonshire, and rabbits in many counties; the baum marten is also "farmed" in Great Britain, but the results to date are not too good, owing to the animals' fighting habits.

Further, the male marten, sad to relate, frequently attacks and kills his mate, a state of affairs which the writer believes to be almost unprecedented; although, in New York, a male polar bear and a jaguar each attacked and killed a female the moment she was introduced into the male's cage.

The farming of rabbits is now being carried out on extensive lines in England, France, Belgium, and Holland, and scientific breeding is producing excellent results.

CHAPTER V

MARKETS AND MARKETING

THE profits made in the fur trade are not dependent on the occasional specimen skin, but on the quantities of cheaper pelts, which, coming a few at a time, gradually make up the huge quantities sold at the public auctions. For instance, in the London Fur Sales held in October, 1920, no fewer than 1,247,393 moleskins were offered. Two points on this are worth noting : first, the number of men employed to make such an enormous catch, for moles are captured only one at a time ; and, next, the damage to agriculture that these savage but industrious little animals would otherwise have caused. Similar remarks apply practically to all other skins used in the fur trade. Immense damage is done yearly by opossums, muskrats, rabbits, beavers, foxes, and wolves—to mention only a few of the fur-bearers ; and, when we add to them such animals as bears, lions, tigers, and leopards, it becomes obvious that the keeping down of the numbers of such animals becomes an absolute necessity.

In olden days, Byzantium was the corner-stone of the trade, but the chief fur market of the world to-day is London, although its supremacy, both during and immediately after the Great War, was severely challenged by a group of U.S. traders with headquarters at St. Louis and New York. The fur trade went mad under American stimulus, and prices rose, rose, rose, under incessant speculative biddings, until it looked as though furs would become impossible as articles of wear to any but multi-millionaires.

Trader after trader blossomed out, enlarged his

premises, and raked in his profits. Speculator after speculator gave up his job, called himself a skin merchant, and started trading either with the trappers direct or with other speculators ; the boom was terrific, and, as reports of the enormous prices realized by the huge quantities of skins sold at St. Louis kept coming through to England, many people shook their heads and wondered what the ultimate outcome would be. The quantities auctioned in London lessened the attendance of buyers there, and a bulldog atmosphere of hanging on at all costs permeated the London trade ; the boom reached its height in January, 1920, when, under American competition, the sealskins put on the London market sold at an advance of 380 per cent on the prices realized in the previous October !

However, the speculators had " cut off more than they could chew," and, shortly after, the white flag was exhibited in a request from New York for London to suspend its next autumn sales ; the request was turned down, our people realizing that whatever the losses the trade must be restored to sanity. The St. Louis, October, 1920, sales were not held ; the London ones were, and large decreases in prices occurred, which, added to those of April, 1920, swept out the speculators as with a mighty broom. Firm after firm crashed in America ; trader after trader defaulted ; and, to cut a long story short, the trade is cleaner and healthier for the struggle. British merchants did not escape scathless, and one of the oldest and most respected firms on the market was caught—with stocks of skins bought at the top prices and unrealizable at half their cost—and had to go into liquidation ; but the casualty list in Britain was small indeed compared to the wholesale slaughter of would-be " get-rich-quick's " in the U.S.A.

The world War played havoc with the fur trade.

Germany, whose dressing and dyeing are world-famous, of course, was out of it at once ; and Russia, which, with its province of Siberia, is the second fur-producing country of the world, gradually followed suit. When it is realized that the main European and Asiatic fur markets were situated at Nuremberg, Leipzig, Budapest, Prague, Frankfort, Moscow, Irbit, Ishim, and Nijni-Novgorod, it becomes only too easy to see what a blow the cutting off of these cities was to the trade generally.

Some of these markets have now reopened. Leipzig has resumed the normal tenor of its way, though its progress was severely retarded for some years owing to the vagaries of the mark, which caused the suspension of several firms. To add to the difficulties, the Russian Soviet Government sent a large quantity of furs to this market for disposal; and an indignant merchant, finding that he was expected to bid for his own skins, obtained an order of the Court, subsequently rescinded, stopping the sale. Soviet sales are now conducted in a rather more business-like manner.

The German trade is now going steadily ahead, and a constant stream of novelties in the preparation and dyeing of furs is proceeding from the factories of that nation.

The Russian Government has taken the whole fur trade of the country into its own hands. There are no trading posts as we understand them, but trappers must sell their catches, at a limited price, fixed by Government, to certain small trade unions. These unions, as they have not the right of export, in turn hand over their collections, at a profit, to larger organizations that have such right. Price limits—not always obtained from buyers of other nationalities—are fixed by the Government.

Markets of varying importance in Canada and U.S.A. are at St. Louis, New York, Edmonton, Vancouver, The Pas, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and St. John. Vladivostock and Petropavlovsk were, in pre-War days, celebrated centres of the fur trade; the former town now does a certain amount of export trade, the U.S.A. and Japan shipping useful consignments, and what happens at the latter is, as with most things Russian nowadays, "wropt in mystery."

Skins arrive at these various markets in various forms and in all sorts of qualities. Trappers naturally sell to the posts or travelling traders what they have, irrespective of size, quality, or anything else. It is then up to these men, who may be termed "factors," to make a rough assortment before selling to collectors or forwarding to base posts. Collectors get the skins "in the grease," i.e. just as they have been flayed from the animal, and it is a very difficult matter indeed correctly to appraise skins frozen stiff and usually inside out. When skins are shown with the fur outside, they are described as "in the hair"; when inside out, they are either "cased" or "in the pelt."

The collector has them "scraped," i.e. roughly cleaned of extra fat and dirt, and they are then "shaped" on wooden blocks, this process approximating them roughly to the animal shape; up to this point the skins are like nothing on earth, but after "shaping" a distinct improvement is to be noted.

They are then roughly graded into firsts, seconds, thirds, and "damaged," and are ready for inspection by buyers.

In St. Louis and probably elsewhere are held what are known as "floor sales." The buyers come into a warehouse where skins are heaped in piles, examine them, and make their bids by writing them down and

handing them, closed, to the auctioneer. He opens them successively and announces the highest bidder as the buyer : it is the difference between open voting and a ballot.

At Leipzig the market is known as the " Bruhl," and the system there is one of " haggling " in a way that is rather irritating to people accustomed to auctions.

The London fur sales take place nowadays three times a year—in January, April, and October—and attract buyers from all parts of the world. The bigger sales are conducted in a more or less tense atmosphere ; but after the bulk of the skins are disposed of, buyers are inclined to make merry, and some of the small sales go on in something approaching pandemonium. Nobody apparently is wishful to buy, nobody has seen any of the lots, but all want to air their views simultaneously ; and what with five or six languages being shouted all over the sale-room, an atmosphere of cigar smoke, and a general feeling of " work is done and play's begun," the lot of the unfortunate auctioneer is not a happy one : it is a marvel that he sells anything : but he does—somehow or other.

On the other hand, in the big sales the first tap of the hammer stills the noise, and thereafter the auction proceeds at a breakneck pace, something like this. *Tap*. " Now, gentlemen, how much for Lot 1001 ? Shall we say 5s. ? Thank you, 5s. ; a penny, two-pence, threepence, fourpence. Are y'all done ?—going—*tap*. 1002. The same ? no more—*tap*. Three—the same—no more—*tap*. Four—the same—fivepence ; any advance—*tap*." This is said at about two hundred words a minute. No other sound is heard, and only by long experience can the observer ascertain who has bought or who is bidding. Bids are usually made by winks, nods, or " making faces," and the market clerks,

who are employed to find out who is buying, have their work cut out to carry on their duties with accuracy.

No samples are in the auction room—which resembles a lecture theatre at a hospital, but on a greatly magnified scale—but the goods are on show in various warehouses, some modern, others decidedly not; and for days and weeks, while the sales are on, an endless procession of white-coated buyers passes round, valuing the skins by the sense of touch as much as anything else (it must be remembered that enormous quantities of skins are shown with the fur inside—“cased”), noting their remarks and prices on their catalogues, and ever on the look-out for something which they trust nobody else will have noticed.

At the end of each day, every buyer receives a “contract” from the selling broker, telling him what lots have been knocked down to him and the price, and stating the “prompt” day.

This is the day upon which payment is due and when the skins should be removed from the broker’s warehouse. Five per cent interest is *charged* on the account *after* prompt day, and is usually *allowed* for as many days as the account is settled *before* prompt.

It is difficult to realize what vast sums are involved in these auctions. One hears “Lot 1, 60s.”: that does not sound much, but when an inspection of the catalogue shows that “Lot 1” contains 200 skins of red fox, and that there are 10,000 skins to be sold, the affair takes on a somewhat different complexion.

History relates that an unsuspecting outsider, hearing that skins were cheap at the fur sales, wandered in one day in the hope of securing a bargain for his wife. He inquired what was being sold, and was told “marten”; and hearing the auctioneer asking for “any advance on 19s. 6d.,” thought “now’s the day and now’s the hour,”

and bid 20s., at which the lot was knocked down to him. He then went to the office, being eager to pay and bear home his spoil in triumph; and, putting down a sovereign (which will enable readers to date the anecdote), demanded his "marten"; he nearly fainted on being told that his lot contained 238 raw skins, and he was consequently liable for £238 plus brokerage, warehouse charges, etc. However, after a somewhat frenzied interval, he was called into the office and read a severe lecture on the impropriety of meddling with things he did not understand, and then "defendant was discharged with a caution."

There is quite an art in bidding successfully. You should know when to bid languidly as though devoid of interest, or when to express intense excitement. You should study, if possible, the expressions of rival bidders and sum them up—know when to start bidding so that, should you be forced to your limit, your limit bid may be your own and not an opponent's. In explanation of the above statement, assume your "cast-iron limit" for a lot is 20s. and bids are rising by 1s.; it is obvious that if you come in on an odd price, say 17s., and another buyer raises you twice, your last bid will be 19s.; and if your opponent's limit is 20s. also, he will get the lot and not you—which will be annoying.

The London fur sales are intensely interesting to a student of psychology and, although they are to-day conducted in a manner by no means so decorous as that of fifteen years ago, the will is still there; the atmosphere is the same; and, despite the withdrawal of the free lunches in which one indulged in the old days, competition is as keen as or keener than ever.

The sales were formerly conducted in dead silence: not a sound was to be heard but the monotonous *staccato* of the auctioneer, punctuated with the falling

hammer, a periodic rustling of catalogues, and an occasional weird noise from some buyer whose "wink" had missed the target.

The writer well remembers the sensation caused in 1900 when a silver fox reached the record price of £580; as the hammer fell, a spontaneous outburst of applause rolled round the room, and even the auctioneer, who was a rare "hustler," paused for a few moments to let the excitement die down. Nowadays, however, a good deal more noise, owing in part to a new generation of buyers, goes on.

In pre-War days the cosmopolitan crowd of buyers, who had assembled in London for the raw skin sales, subsequently proceeded to Leipzig where the German market, for dressed skins as well as raw, was held; everything, of course, went into the melting-pot during the War, and large quantities of—frequently very inferior—"dressed" furs were sold in London. Affairs have, however, gradually settled down; and in the 1922 spring sales, for the first time for a good many years, the bigger brokers sold raw skins as before the War, unadulterated with semi-secondhand dressed furs.

In the market at Nijni-Novgorod, fur selling continued for about three months in a great annual fair, in which almost everything under the sun could be purchased. Here, despite Kipling's words, East met West, for into Nijni poured thousands of merchants from Asia, of many languages and all hues, to barter their merchandise, in which furs bulked very largely, for the products of Western civilization.

Annexed are tables showing quantities of skins offered and top prices prevailing in May, 1931.

The reader who, not in the trade, attempts to buy furs at anything near the prices shown will experience a

shock. These quotations are for raw furs, and to the prices shown must be added, *inter alia*, brokerage, warehousing, lot money, cartage dressing, dyeing (in many

RAW SKINS

TOP PRICES. ALL GRADES INCLUSIVE

London Sales. April, 1931

<i>Name</i>	<i>Approx. Quantity</i>	<i>Highest Price</i>
Badger, Canadian	1,000	120/-
„ Russian	1,300	5/3
Bear, black }	8,300	70/-
„ brown }		80/-
„ grizzly }		80/-
„ white	250	60/-
Beaver	5,400	£7 8/-
Cat, wild	30,000	16/6
„ house	22,000	2/1
„ civet	21,000	1/11
„ „ Chinese ¹	18,000	Withdrawn
Chinchilla rats ¹	11,300	Withdrawn
Dog, Chinese skins	18,000	4/1
Ermine, Canadian and Russian	300,000	11/10
Fisher	800	£45
Fitch	100,000	18/6
Fox, blue	5,600	£28
„ cross	2,500	£29
„ Japanese	30	22/-
„ South American ¹	36,000	Withdrawn
„ red Australian	51,000	19/-
„ silver	38,500	£54
„ white	22,000	£8 2/-
Goat skins, grey	44,500	3/6
„ „ black	4,000	2/9
Hare, white, raw and dressed	290,000	2/1
Jackal	30,000	1/8
Kid skins, black ¹	5,600	Withdrawn
Kolinski	165,000	13/5
Lamb, Persian	330,000	33/-
„ broadtail	About 4,000	47/-
Leopard	1,200	112/-
Lynx, Canadian	3,200	£11 10/-
Marmot	615,000	4/1

RAW SKINS

TOP PRICES. ALL GRADES INCLUSIVE (*Contd.*)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Approx. Quantity</i>	<i>Highest Price</i>
Marten, American	5,500	£11
„ baum	4,000	£8 5/-
„ stone	11,500	75/-
Mink	41,000	84/-
Mole	240,000	20/- per 100
Monkey	5,000	1/10
Musquash	310,000	4/9
„ Southern	516,000	2/4
Nutria	600	15/9
Opossum, American	930,000	7/-
„ Australian	640,000	15/-
Peschaniki	51,000	9d.
Otter	10,500	£13 5/-
Rabbit, white	815,000	1/7
Raccoon	3,200	33/-
Sable	1,350	£38
Sea Otter	4	£85
Seal, hair	10,000	6/3
„ fur, raw and dressed ¹	3,500	Withdrawn
Skunk	675,000	17/-
Squirrel, raw and dressed	780,000	3/2
Thibet	32,500	2/10
Tiger		£20
Wallaby	152,500	8/3
Wolf	39,000	160/-
Wolverine	600	45/-

¹ These skins were withdrawn at the auctions owing to lack of interest on the part of buyers, but an average price would be—

Civet, Chinese	2/-
Chinchilla rats	6d.
Fox, South American	10/6
Kid skins, black	5/6
Seal, fur, dressed and dyed	£6

cases), assorting, merchant's profit, manufacturer's profit and retailer's profit.

Apart from all these considerations, it does not follow that, because a fur goes down, say, 10 per cent in the

winter sales, a corresponding reduction to the retail buyer is at once made. Strictly speaking, the effect of the fall would not be felt by the "man in the street" for some months; and, although reductions are passed on as quickly as possible, they are certainly not immediate in their effect.

As to quantities, it may be remarked that certain animals, e.g. opossums and skunks, increase in numbers with the advance of civilization; they flourish to a much greater degree when near the abodes of men than in the wilderness. As an example, in 1849 some 30,000 American opossum skins were sold, in 1891 over 500,000, and in 1931, spring only, over 930,000. In 1871, 18,000 Australian opossums were offered, whilst at this year's spring sales over 635,000 were put up to auction.

The well-known rabbit and the detested rat are other examples, but the larger animals flee civilization; and the number of their skins offered shows no marked increase, rather the other way.

It has been stated that the fur trade is a cruel trade. Without wishing to enter into an argument, it may be pointed out that, if left to their own devices, practically every one of the animals whose skins are sold by man would die a violent death, in many cases with a long-drawn-out anticipatory knowledge that the furred or feathered pursuer could not be shaken off.

Traps, which kill instantly and without warning, are merciful, but nothing—paradoxical as it may seem—is so merciless as Nature: "kill or be killed" applies almost without exception not only to the fur-bearers but to every wild animal that lives—be it bird, beast or fish.

This chapter on Markets cannot be closed without some reference to the menace overhanging the fur trade from the Russian "Five Year Plan."

The plan, in so far as it relates to the fur trade, not

only of Great Britain but of other "capitalistic" countries, aims at destroying entirely the trade of those countries by putting on their markets masses of goods at a price with which they are unable to compete.

Russian labour, under the Five Year Plan, is conscripted, and paid for at conscript rates—mainly in kind. The factories never stop—there are no Sundays, and the Soviet theory is that in five years the Russian Government will be able to dictate terms to the whole world by the threat above mentioned. The Soviet representatives are quite cynical about it; memorandums have been exchanged on the subject, and the Russians say they fail to see that the destruction of the British fur industry (with its 60,000 to 70,000 employees) will be to the detriment of the trade (by which they mean the Russian trade, both raw and manufactured); in other words, the only permissible fur trade is to be that under the control of the Soviet Government.

This book is not a political work, but the writer feels impelled to express the view that strong Government action is called for—the individual is helpless, and if all the Soviet plans come to fruition, we can look forward to Soviet fur shops opened in this country, supplied with furs produced by slave labour at prices which our own people, paying Fur Trade Board wages and on a 48-hour week, cannot even approach.

Some people see the beginning of the attack on the British fur trade first by the Soviets opening auction sales at Leningrad and Moscow; this, of course, in view of the international character of the fur trade, cannot be reasonably objected to—naturally it does not do the London or Leipzig sales any good, but that is a matter that cannot be helped.

A more questionable idea, Machiavellian, in fact—if intended—is that of selling Russian raw skins at a

dearer rate than dressed and dyed. The Russian memorandum, indeed, indicates the desire to eliminate the British fur dresser, dyer, and manufacturer on the grounds that their work can be done better in Russia—but it entirely ignores the hours worked by the Russian employees and the wages they receive.

CHAPTER VI

MANUFACTURE AND FASHION

WHEN a furrier has taken delivery of his raw skins from the warehouse, they are not in the least suited for wearing apparel, and hardly resemble in any particular whatsoever the fur coats and stoles that one sees worn by women. Seal skins, for example, usually come over "in salt," and are moist, dirty, brown, and most repulsive objects. Beavers are flat and hard as a board ; minks and ermines are frequently inside out, exhibiting a singularly unpleasing appearance ; and so on *ad nauseam*. To get these raw skins manufactured necessitates technical and artistic skill of a high order, and the first process through which they go is that of "dressing."

To dress a skin implies changing it from the somewhat gruesome state in which it is when sold at the auction sales to a condition of softness, iridescence, and beauty fit for the shoulders of fair femininity. The art of dressing skins has been known in some form or other from the very earliest ages, and savage races, with their primitive facilities, give the white man a very hard task to beat them, despite the latter's knowledge of chemicals and the elaborate machinery which he has at his disposal.

The Eskimo, for instance, who can make use of no machinery other than his wife's teeth, rejoices in well dressed furs, though to describe the man himself as "well dressed" requires imagination that most of us do not possess.

The teeth of Eskimo women are worn down to the

gums after a few years of this incessant chewing of skins to render them supple ; the teeth of a European woman would not last as many days were she to attempt this same task.

The Red Indian's dressing is hardly surpassed to-day, except perhaps in finish ; whilst the Zulu excels in the preparation of leopard, deer, and other skins. Chinese dressing, although exceedingly good, usually leaves a kind of "sour" odour in the leather, and an expert can tell a Chinese fur with his eyes shut, merely by the smell.

The Germans have always been noted for their dressing, particularly with grey squirrel and the small cats and rodents that are usually made into "sacs" ; they are also good at lamb and beaver.

The English dressing was, and is, unexcelled for seals, sable, chinchilla, fox, skunk, and mole ; and, prior to the War, an enormous proportion of the raw skins sold in London were dressed there also.

The Americans have now taken up this branch of the trade, and with a certain measure of success. American writers claim that their dressing is now at least as good as any done in Europe. As with the fur auctions, the War gave them their chance, which they took with all their well-known energy.

The procedure of dressing varies somewhat according to the skins under treatment ; but we may take, for example, the beaver (which goes through ninety-eight handlings from the raw to the finished state) and follow the skins through the dresser's hands from start to finish.

The skins, then, are first soaked in salt water, if the weather is very hot, for twelve hours ; if cool, for twenty-four hours, and then conveyed to a centrifugal machine—a kind of circular colander of immense size—which, rotating at a terrific speed, clears the superfluous

moisture away. The fur is next cleaned with benzine, and then goes via a hot couch to the unhairer. This craftsman, after thoroughly warming the skin, stretches it over a rounded wooden block about the size of a large dog, and with a blunt, two-handled, sickle-shaped knife presses strongly, with a dragging action, on the fur. This has the effect of pulling out the rough hair by the root and leaving the soft fur or down untouched. The skin may have to go to be reheated three or four times before the top hair is all removed. Troublesome patches are treated with a sharp knife ; but this is used as little as possible, as on the parts of the skin where it has been utilized the fur will "flow" only one way, whereas, after the use of the blunt instrument, it "flows" equally well up or down. Billiard players, accustomed to the "nap" of the green cloth, will readily understand what an advantage it is to have the fur flowing either way.

The skins next go to a drum, which, as its name implies, is a gigantic wooden cylinder into which a quantity of dry sawdust is placed. The drum is then rotated for an hour or more, the sawdust by this means being forced into the fur and carrying on the cleaning process.

From the drum the skins are put into tanks containing ordinary fresh water, and soak there overnight, in the morning being conveyed to the fleshers.

Each flesher sits in front of an enormous knife, about 3 ft. by 1 ft., which is fastened in a vertical position. He takes a skin and, in a way that makes the observer's blood run cold, runs it with a "drawing" motion over the knife edge, thereby shaving off anything that remains of fat or grease. Other fleshers work at benches, at which are circular razor-edged knives revolving at great speed. These knives are protected by a shield except for the minutest fraction of an inch, and the

skin is applied to them, the guard ensuring that too much of the pelt shall not be cut off.

After this process, the skins are hung up in a hot room, strongly reminiscent in point of heat of that of a Turkish bath; the heat should preferably be between 120° and 130°, and in no case must it fall below 80°. In this chamber the skins get thoroughly dried and, at the same time, hard once more.

Again they visit the drum and sawdust, this time for the purpose of being broken down, i.e. made flexible, and when the desired state of flexibility is arrived at they are extracted and carried away to be—strange to say—thickly covered on the leather side with grease. The grease, which is more expensive than margarine, though not so inviting in appearance, is spread on the skins for all the world like buttering bread, but ruinously thick. The skins are then folded up, grease inside, and put in an enormous tub, where a gentleman, “mid nodings on,” treads them steadily for a varying period. This process is known as “leathering.”

It is a weird experience to see this man, resting his arms on the top of the tub and going through his tread-mill exercise in perfect silence. He, despite his monotonous and sticky job, is a skilled worker. The incessant trampling gradually creates heat by friction, and he must know to a minute when to call a halt and have the skins removed. If he gives them insufficient time, they will not leather properly, but in patches; if, on the other hand, he gives them too much, the hair will “mat” and the skins (of which there may be hundreds if of small size, e.g. moles) will be irretrievably ruined.

Coarser skins are “trampled” in a machine, double wooden pistons working in troughs.

Thereafter they are turned to the fur side and are thoroughly rubbed with sawdust, then to the drum,

where the sawdust may be changed six times before they are finally clean.

This completes the process of dressing, and until he gets the skins back the furrier does not know what sort of a bargain he has got ; and it also becomes easily understandable why no furrier will take the risk of a raw skin coming out well after dressing, for if, when the animal is first skinned, any part has been allowed to putrify, when the skin is dressed all the fur on the other side will come out owing to the roots having been destroyed.

Dressing, of course, varies very much in its application according to the skin to be treated, and it should be mentioned that, after each " drumming " with sawdust, the sawdust is knocked out of the skins either by beating by hand or in another kind of drum, sometimes termed a " cage," whilst the fur comb is constantly called into play.

Most dressers have also secret chemicals, which they use at their own specially appointed time, usually for the purpose of perfecting the leather.

The skins, now known as furs, are ready for examination by their owner, and grading as desired. Their first grading by the brokers may, after dressing, be shown to be approximately correct—or hopelessly wrong, for dressing shows a skin as it is and not as it was thought to be. The grading is done by the assorter, who is a highly-paid and skilled man. The master furrier will have certain skins also dyed or topped, both of which processes demand the highest skill.

Dyeing, in particular, has secrets that are of immense value and which are most jealously guarded, which is not to be wondered at considering that many thousands of experiments are made before a really satisfactory dye process is evolved. The brain power expended is

enormous seeing that the perfected seal-dyeing process takes from six weeks to two months, and each skin has the dye applied many times. A tremendous amount has been written and will be written on the dyeing industry, which was revolutionized by the discovery of aniline dyes by (not the Germans as is commonly assumed) Sir W. H. Perkin, an Englishman; but, from a furrier's point of view, different countries excel in different dyes.

Until the outbreak of the Great War, London excelled in dyeing seals; Germany in Persian lamb, fox, and squirrel; France in musquash and black rabbits; and Belgium in what may be termed "fancy dyes." To-day the English position is somewhat stronger, and a formidable competitor has arisen in America.

American dyeing was established during the War by the head dyer in a celebrated English works (he was a German, by the way) being induced by an American organization to leave his employers and transfer his knowledge across the Atlantic; with him went the head dresser—an Englishman, unfortunately—and the improved position taken by American dressing and dyeing is largely due to these two individuals.

The English firm in question had to stop dyeing during the War and utilize all its plant for dressing the goat skins which, in the form of jerkins, were served out to the troops in Flanders during the winters of 1915-16-17. When we learn that 80,000 skins a week were so treated, it speaks volumes for the energy and adaptability of our British dyers and dressers.

The firm mentioned specializes in seal dressing and dyeing, and, as stated elsewhere, the alterations in the raw skin until it becomes the finished seal savour of the miraculous. Each process makes some change, in each case for the better, and these are, roughly:

blubbering, washing in soap and soda, rinsing, heating and unhairing—as with the beaver; drying, greasing with a mixture into which seal oil largely enters, and leathering in a kicking machine termed a “mill.” Visits to the drum and cage. Dyeing by dipping and brushing; cleaning the leather by repeatedly passing over a revolving emery wheel; machining, which removes any top hairs left after unhairing, and is a highly ingenious process, and a final cleaning. “Fluffing,” “brushing,” and “combing” machines may all be seen in action; and apropos of the “mills,” it should be mentioned that the mill for long-haired furs like fox moves slowly; otherwise there is a great danger of the fur’s “felting,” i.e. becoming “felt” owing to adhesion.

The War forced the British dyers to fall back on their own researches, owing to the cutting off of Germany and the practical cessation of the French and Belgian dye industry. These researches, fostered by the Government, have made dyeing a very different matter from what it was in pre-War days. Dyes are better, more enduring, and of many more colours to-day than in 1914. For example, Mongolian and Turkish *red* foxes are now dyed *bleuté* or blue-grey shade, the dyers having discovered a means of obliterating the natural red. Previously the only sound dyes used on these foxes were black or dark brown.

A much favoured process with furriers is known as “topping.” It frequently happens that a skin, otherwise good, well-haired and pelted, is patchy or poor with regard to colour. If such a skin be “topped,” it acquires artificially that colour which Nature has denied to it.

“Topping,” to a furrier, means lightly and artistically brushing the top hairs (not the “down”) with the dye

so as to reproduce on a badly marked skin the rich colouring that is evident on a good quality specimen.

The "topper" always works with a natural skin in front of him, and must possess a delicate touch, a sense of proportion, and artistic perception.

Skins treated in this way by a skilful worker are most difficult—to the non-expert, impossible—to distinguish from the natural; they have the highly advantageous quality of being much cheaper, and the owner may comfort herself with the assurance that they are not "dyed" skins. "Topping," by the way, is frequently used to freshen up partly-worn skins, which, under this treatment, assume the appearance of the perfectly new article.

The author had the intention of devoting some space to fashion in furs, but the task is too severe nowadays, for furs in the last thirty years have followed the dress-making fashions to no small degree; and the furrier with any pretensions whatever can no more sell an old model than a leading fashionable dressmaker can dispose of a *démodé* frock.

This is another reason for the high price of furs. Assume that the fashion of the sleeve alters—the fur sleeve must follow suit; the length of skirt increases a foot—the furrier's last year's models are at once unsaleable.

Gone are the days when the most fashionable neck fur was the plain straight stole, two skins long, and what is known as "double fur." Stoles, like chocolate creams, have increased in size to a tremendous extent (or else gone to the smallest limit); and whereas the old-time furrier could stock a hundred or two seal jackets all the same shape, with the comfortable knowledge that if they did not all sell one year they would the next, the modern fur artist keeps as low a stock as

he can, as *he* knows that any garments left over from one season will have to be re-worked at ruinous cost to make them saleable the next. This automatically brings us to the fur worker.

Mention has already been made of the sorter to whom, in the first place, a manufacturing order comes. His task is to match skins so that they can be worked together. He has to consider, *inter alia*, colour, quality, length of hair, grounding, leather, and cost in his assortment ; he is a well-paid man, and deserves to be, for it takes many years of varied experience to make a first-class assorter.

The selected skins are sent with the pattern to the cutter, with whom are associated one or more nailers. The nailers, after damping the skins on the leather side, stretch them over a board and nail them to the shape of the pattern which has been chalked thereon. The skins, after drying and whatever cleaning may be necessary, are passed to the cutter, for a full description of whose work the reader is referred to *Furs and Furriery*, by C. J. Rosenberg (Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd.). Cutting is such a highly technical matter, that to describe it shortly is quite impossible ; the feats that are done with the fur knife must be seen to be believed ; but a cutter can at will make a skin longer or shorter, give it width at the expense of length or *vice versa*, can work two skins or more so that they appear as one, and all without any deterioration in the flow or quality of the fur. Some skins are cut practically to pieces to obtain the desired effect, and rarely is a skin made up without having some, however slight it may be, acquaintance with the cutter's knife. A sable skin in the raw state is short and somewhat dumpy, whereas when made up it is long and elegant. Some furriers obtain this effect by "dropping" the skins, i.e. making

diagonal cuts on either side of the skin, sewing up the tops of the angles, and then sewing the cuts together again. By this process, length is gained at the cost of a slight reduction in width.

Of course, this must not be carried too far, as the skins would then be too thinly furred, with excessive length ; but, done in moderation, it has a wonderfully improving effect on skins.

After the cutter has finished, the sewers carry on. Formerly all sewing was done by hand, but to-day highly efficient fur-sewing machines do the work.

Liners and finishers then complete the job, which is examined with eagle eye by possibly three experts before being finally passed ready for the showroom or the customer.

Cleaning has been referred to, and this is done in various ways according to the fur. The " drum " and " cage " are again in use ; the humble but necessary sawdust is once more in evidence ; benzine, hot sand, plaster of Paris—each have a part to play in the scheme of things, with the result, as a rule, that the cleaned fur looks like new.

One other point for consideration, not only in manufacture but throughout the trade, is " moth," described in the same breath as the furrier's worst enemy and best friend ! " Moth " in furs is the havoc produced by the action of the grub of the clothes moth—to use a common term. The insect shelters in the fur and lays its eggs at the roots of the hair. When the grub hatches it attacks the roots in the leather so that the hair falls out, and large bare patches appear ; the hair " mats " and gets sticky, and, if the ravages of the grub are not checked, utter ruin of the fur results.

Prevention is better than cure, and, short of keeping the entire stock in cold storage, the best preventive is

the homely but efficacious one of beating the furs with light canes. There is an art in this apparently simple labour, and a stroke that is suitable for bear would utterly spoil chinchilla or mole. The sticks are always at work in a furrier's, and the operation, besides being a safeguard against moth, has a freshening effect on the furs.

Several beating machines have been invented, of most ingenious design, operating both canes and straps ; but the hand method is still by far the most popular, in Great Britain at least. Practically every big firm has beating machines, but the visitor rarely sees them in action ; whilst beating by hand is incessant. Of course, the dust created by the action of the canes tends to spoil the smooth running of the machines ; but, be the reason what it may, beating machines are not in high esteem.

CHAPTER VII

HINTS ON PURCHASING AND CARING FOR FURS— GENERAL INFORMATION

PEOPLE in the fur trade are often asked : " How can I tell a good fur ? " The answer is simple : " You can't ! " Nothing but experience counts for anything serious in the fur trade, and the world is full of " sharks " who are anxious to prey on the credulity of the innocent. Even though your eye is pleased with the general effect, the fur you are examining may be worth 10s. or £100, and only a furrier can be of real assistance. The first hint, therefore, in purchasing a fur is : "*Go to a firm that has a reputation to lose.*" You will have to pay more, but if you have read this book you must realize that good furs are not, and never can be, cheap. On the other hand, by placing yourself in the hands of a first-class furrier, you may be sure that your purchases will be what they are described to be.

The following incident will show the extreme difficulty of distinguishing furs. The writer was approached with this query, by a representative of a great daily newspaper. Three coats were shown to the journalist, and he was invited, first, to look at them at a few yards' range, and then to examine them closely.

At a distance of ten feet he could distinguish no difference ; on a closer inspection he thought two were exactly alike, and possibly the third was a better quality ; and when he learnt that one was rabbit, the second musquash, and the third seal, his astonishment was great. To such perfection has the art of camouflage been brought in the fur trade.

The wear to be obtained from the three garments in question was another matter : rabbit, of course, does not last long, but musquash and seal, particularly the latter, are much more wear-resisting. Seal coats or dolmans, in former days, were handed down from mother to daughter for an incredible period, and, if due care was taken of them, counted on an existence of perhaps fifty years.

If you want something hard-wearing, then otter, mink, skunk, astrakhan, seal, or badger will fill the bill ; if grace is sought for, then sable, mole, marten, ermine, broadtail, or fox ; while, if cheapness is the first consideration, then rabbit, kolinsky, raccoon, or opossum are indicated. (See table at end of book.)

Having made your purchase, remember to keep your furs hanging up and in darkness ; give them a shake before you put them on and another when you take them off. Shake them with the "flow of the fur," i.e. from the head. Beat them occasionally with a light cane ; comb them gently but frequently (with a fur comb for preference). Should "moth" get in, send them to a furrier's at once, and the same remark applies to cleaning.

If your furs want cleaning, send them to a furrier—he is a specialist.

Should your furs get wet, never dry them in front of a fire ; let them hang up—in a draught for preference. Let them dry gradually, and, when the moisture has gone, shake them well and comb. Remember that a little care taken with these beautiful and usually expensive articles of wearing apparel is repaid a thousandfold.

Pepper, camphor, and naphthaline are all used as preventives of moth, but none is so certain as the simple methods outlined above.

Of course, in summer-time—if any—it is a much better plan to send the furs to cold storage, where the dry cold not only prevents moth but imparts a lustre to the furs which they would not otherwise enjoy. It is as well to remember to give the furrier a couple of days' notice when you wish your furs returned, as to take furs from a freezing room direct into the warmer temperature of out-of-doors is a thing that "isn't done." They must spend some time in an intermediate chamber to get, as it were, acclimatized; otherwise, their frozen state causes moisture from the air to be deposited on them in the same way that windows "cloud" in winter.

At the risk of reiteration—always go to a furrier of repute: the most amazing swindles are perpetrated, almost daily, on the credulous.

There is the seafaring (?) man, who approaches with mysterious air the unconscious victim and relates a tale of woe as to being stranded—far from his ship, to which he yearns to return—with nothing in his possession but some valuable sables.

Pressed as to where he got them, he tells an awesome tale of Bolsheviks, Odessa and Riga (which to him are adjacent ports), revolver shots, and other horrifying details; and then drawing the purchaser aside in some quiet alley way, he produces a muff and stole, suggests that he is an ignorant man and does not know the value of sables, but supposes they are worth about £50—he is willing to let them go for £7 or thereabouts. Should the fish bite, the seafaring man with many thanks departs to rejoin his non-existent ship, whilst the purchaser hurries to the nearest furrier's, learning on arriving there with his prize that the fur is brown hare, and the muff and stole worth about 25s., the workmanship being of the most inferior quality.

Then there is the lady of reduced means who advertises rich furs for sale, and by legerdemain contrives that the purchaser departs with most inferior stuff, although she may have had some good furs exhibited to her.

On the other hand are the efforts of shoplifters, and swindles perpetrated on furriers by well-dressed "crooks" having rooms at expensive hotels—rooms taken for the occasion. An instance happened in Paris recently, when a well-dressed couple called on a furrier's and asked for some valuable sables to be sent up for inspection.

The assistant who took the furs was shown into a suite and waited in the sitting-room. The male "crook" appeared and, stating that his wife was in bed, took the sables into the bedroom, leaving the door partly open. The assistant heard a murmured conversation, and then the man came back and asked him to wait, as his wife would get up and explain how she wished the furs worked. He then returned again to the bedroom, this time closing the door.

The assistant waited — and that is the story : for when tired of waiting he knocked at the bedroom door ; he found it locked ; found the entrance door locked as well ; and when his furious kicks brought along a chambermaid, he found the "crooks" had departed through another door in the bedroom, which opened into the corridor. That little episode cost the furrier a thousand pounds !

That may be described as an example of the artistic swindle, but for the really picturesque crime a robbery that took place in West 28th Street, New York City, in the summer of 1926, is unique.

One morning, a man carrying a small bag walked into a fur store and asked to be shown some skins. On being

ushered into the stockroom by the proprietor and an assistant, the stranger produced a pistol and invited them to put up their hands. He then whistled, when four confederates appeared, three dressed as porters, and the fourth, with white coat and cigar, the complete furrier. Two other members of the staff who arrived during the proceedings were also held up, and, together with the proprietor and other assistant, tied, gagged, and locked up in the basement.

A trifle of \$50,000 of furs was then leisurely carried away, nobody in the neighbourhood realizing in the least that the white-coated gentleman and his porters were anything but honest traders.

Reverting to our first idea, however, people have in the past been induced to buy rabbit as seal, fitch as sable, goat as bear, nutria and rabbit as beaver ; skunk has been termed Alaska sable ; wallaby, skunk ; and marmot, mink—to quote a few examples only.

You would not buy jewels or precious stones from an unwashed individual with a name like a sneeze ! Why, therefore, try to buy your furs—which are equally precious—from any but from a reliable furrier ?

In conclusion, it may be asked : What are the prospects of a young man (*a*) with capital, (*b*) without capital, in the fur trade ?

For (*a*) the young man with capital but no knowledge, the advice is that he should first lock up his capital so that he will be unable to touch it for some years—even if he wants to. This will put him in the same position as (*b*) for a start.

He should then get a job with a skin merchant and learn all he can from the absolute bottom up, studying skins, sales, methods, markets, and men—especially men. With the knowledge thus acquired in, say, five or six years, he should know enough of the skin trade

and its peculiarities to justify his starting for himself as a skin merchant ; the rest depends entirely on business ability, hard work, tact, and, to a certain extent, luck.

Should he wish to blossom out as a furrier, he should, in addition, spend his spare time in acquiring the technicalities of the trade, e.g. cutting, nailing, cleaning, etc. ; but the prospects of making a rapid fortune as a furrier are not so good as in the case of a skin merchant. A furrier's risks are so much greater ; and to do anything but the most moderate business means such a locking up of capital, that few purses, unless they are extremely deep, can stand the strain.

The skin merchant, on the other hand, acting as a skin factor, does not require either an immense capital or heavy stock, and turns his money over much more frequently.

The writer knows many men who, starting with little capital, are now successful skin merchants ; but the efforts of small capitalists as furriers have, in his knowledge, always come to grief.

To the modest-minded man, if such there be, there is yet a third career, viz., specializing entirely as a fur worker, with the idea of eventually controlling a big firm's factory at a four-figure salary. In this case he should enter as a "learner" and work his way up.

A few figures (gathered from the Fur Trade Board agreed rates) show rates of pay in the trade for workers of both sexes.

RATES OF PAY

BY THE WEEK OF 48 HOURS

Learners (cutters and nailers) start at 13s. 6d. per week, rising to 50s. in sixth year of employment. After six years the worker ceases to be a learner.

Apprentices commence at 12s. 6d., rising to 45s.

	Per wk.	Per hr.
Cutters with at least 2 years' experience as a cutter	80/- or	2/2½
" " " 1 year's	65/-	1/9½
" " less than 1 "	55/-	1/6½
Nailers " at least 2 years'	60/-	1/8
" " " 1 year's	55/-	1/6½
" " less than 1 "	50/-	1/4½
Dressers (male)	70/- to 86/-	
Sorters (male)	80/-	
Female Learners (machinists)	12/6 to 35/-	
Female Machinists	45/-	Piecework on a basis of 60/- per week.
Female Learners (liners and finishers)	12/6 to 32/6	in fifth year.
Female liners and finishers	40/-	Piecework on a basis of 50/- per week.

Male cleaners (minimum) . . . 58/-

Overtime: Ordinary is paid at the time-and-a-half rate.

On Sundays and statutory holidays, double rate.

In view of the large numbers of members of the Jewish persuasion engaged in the trade, Saturday and Sunday are interchangeable in so far as overtime rates are concerned. Above rates are minimum, but employers are at liberty to pay more if they wish to do so.

To the man or woman who has the art of selling in his or her composition, it would be as well to apply for a post in a good retail furrier's, with the idea of eventually either becoming a buyer or manager, or even starting on one's own account. The risks of the latter have been pointed out—the capital required is important; on the other hand, most wholesale firms will send goods on approval or "date" them forward, which is of great assistance to the struggling furrier. It is the same at each end of the line—the trader supplies the Indians with material in advance, the wholesaler supplies the retailer with goods in advance—in each case looking for his profit to the work done in late autumn and winter.

Successful saleswomen can and do earn highly satisfactory salaries, and the girl who sets out with the idea

of becoming a first-class fur saleswoman has a most lucrative end in view. She should cultivate French, however, as many extremely wealthy foreigners, with small knowledge of English, but, at least, colloquial French, visit England yearly. Spanish also is a *desideratum*, and for similar reasons. Selling, of course, is an art, and he or she who would do well at it in furs must be—as Wellington said of the French infantry—"very good," possessed of taste, tact, good temper, good education, and the patience of Job.

The above-mentioned virtues also apply to a successful traveller, and he, if possessed of them *plus* intense energy, will find the fur trade one of the best paying undertakings in existence.

Every salesman or saleswoman should—*not endeavour to*—acquire a sound knowledge of the beautiful skins he or she is called upon to sell. A customer visiting a furrier's looks on it as an event and is frequently a little nervous. Obviously the first thing is to establish confidence, and the seller who is sure of his facts and tactfully impresses the client with his fur knowledge has gone a long way towards this milestone in successful salesmanship.

A table, compiled by the author, on the durability of furs, is appended. From it one may realize that the hardest-wearing fur is sea otter and the most fragile, hare, and possibly a little surprise may be evoked at the high position of Canadian sable—apparently so delicate, and the low position of goat—apparently so hard.

The polar bear is unaware
Of cold that cuts one through.
For why? He has a coat of hair.
Why don't you get one too?

—With apologies to *Hilaire Belloc*.

THE WEAR OF FURS

<i>Fur</i>	<i>Percentage of Durability</i>	<i>Position</i>
Sea otter	100	1
Otter	98	2
Bear	94·6	3
Beaver	91	4
Seal	83·7	5
Leopard	81·6	6
Mink	76·1	7
Badger	75	8
Raccoon	73·3	9
Sable, Canadian	67·5	10
Skunk	66·3	11
Persian lamb	63·75	12
Sable, Russian, natural	63·75	13
Wolf	63·3	14
Marten, baum, natural	60	15
„ „ dyed	60	16
Sable, Russian, topped	55	17
Musquash, natural	51·7	18
Sable, Russian, dyed	50	19
Marten, stone	43·5	20
Fox, natural red	43·3	21
Opossum, Australian	42·3	22
Fox, silver	40	23
Opossum, American	37	24
Nutria	35·5	25
Lynx, natural	33·3	26
Musquash, Hudson	33	27
Ermine	32·5	28
Squirrel	28·75	29
Fox, dyed black	25	30
Goat	23·3	31
Lynx, black	22·5	32
Fox, white	20	33
„ <i>bleuté</i>	20	34
Astrakhan broadtail	18·75	35
Chinchilla	17·5	36
Caracul	15	37
Mole	11	38
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